

MRS. BRADLEY SERIES

# LAMENT *for* LETO



GLADYS  
MITCHELL

# LAMENT FOR LETO

# **Titles by Gladys Mitchell**

*Speedy Death* (1929)  
*The Mystery of a Butcher's Shop* (1929)  
*The Longer Bodies* (1930)  
*The Saltmarsh Murders* (1932)  
*Death at the Opera* (1934)  
*The Devil at Saxon Wall* (1935)  
*Dead Men's Morris* (1936)  
*Come Away, Death* (1937)  
*St. Peter's Finger* (1938)  
*Printer's Error* (1939)  
*Brazen Tongue* (1940)  
*Hangman's Curfew* (1941)  
*When Last I Died* (1941)  
*Laurels Are Poison* (1942)  
*Sunset Over Soho* (1943)  
*The Worst Viper* (1943)  
*My Father Sleeps* (1944)  
*The Rising of the Moon* (1945)  
*Here Comes a Chopper* (1946)  
*Death and the Maiden* (1947)  
*The Dancing Druids* (1948)  
*Tom Brown's Body* (1949)  
*Groaning Spinney* (1950)  
*The Devil's Elbow* (1951)  
*The Echoing Strangers* (1952)  
*Merlin's Furlong* (1953)  
*Faintley Speaking* (1954)  
*On Your Marks* (1954)  
*Watson's Choice* (1955)

*Twelve Horses and the Hangman's Noose* (1956)  
*The Twenty-Third Man* (1957)  
*Spotted Hemlock* (1958)  
*The Man Who Grew Tomatoes* (1959)  
*Say It with Flowers* (1960)  
*The Nodding Canaries* (1961)  
*My Bones Will Keep* (1962)  
*Adders on the Heath* (1963)  
*Death of a Delft Blue* (1964)  
*Pageant of Murder* (1965)  
*The Croaking Raven* (1966)  
*Skeleton Island* (1967)  
*Three Quick and Five Dead* (1968)  
*Dance to Your Daddy* (1969)  
*Gory Dew* (1970)  
*Lament for Leto* (1971)  
*A Hearse on May-Day* (1972)  
*The Murder of Busy Lizzie* (1973)  
*A Javelin for Jonah* (1974)  
*Winking at the Brim* (1974)  
*Convent on Styx* (1975)  
*Late, Late in the Evening* (1976)  
*Noonday and Night* (1977)  
*Fault in the Structure* (1977)  
*Wraiths and Changelings* (1978)  
*Mingled with Venom* (1978)  
*Nest of Vipers* (1979)  
*The Mudflats of the Dead* (1979)  
*Uncoffin'd Clay* (1980)  
*The Whispering Knights* (1980)  
*The Death-Cap Dancers* (1981)  
*Lovers, Make Moan* (1981)  
*Here Lies Gloria Mundy* (1982)  
*Death of a Burrowing Mole* (1982)  
*The Greenstone Griffins* (1983)  
*Cold, Lone and Still* (1983)

*No Winding Sheet* (1984)  
*The Crozier Pharaohs* (1984)

# **Gladys Mitchell writing as Malcolm Torrie**

*Heavy as Lead* (1966)

*Late and Cold* (1967)

*Your Secret Friend* (1968)

*Shades of Darkness* (1970)

*Bismarck Herrings* (1971)

# LAMENT FOR LETO

GLADYS MITCHELL

 THOMAS & MERCER

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, organizations, places, events, and incidents are either products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously.

Text copyright © The Executors of the Estate of Gladys Mitchell 1971.  
All rights reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced, or stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without express written permission of the publisher.

Published by Thomas & Mercer, Seattle, 2014  
[www.apub.com](http://www.apub.com)

First published Great Britain in 1971 by Michael Joseph Amazon, the Amazon logo, and Thomas & Mercer are trademarks of [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com), Inc., or its affiliates.

E-ISBN: 9781477869147



## A Note about this E-Book

The text of this book has been preserved from the original British edition and includes British vocabulary, grammar, style, and punctuation, some of which may differ from modern publishing practices. Every care has been taken to preserve the author's tone and meaning, with only minimal changes to punctuation and wording to ensure a fluent experience for modern readers.

To Michael Cottrill and the Muses, particularly his own.

Poseidon, be merciful unto those mariners  
who cross the Aegean Sea, and let thine  
anger expend itself against the defiant  
rocks and not upon their frail vessels.

# Contents

[AUTHOR'S NOTE](#)

[CHAPTER ONE Thalia, the Muse of Comedy](#)

[CHAPTER TWO Terpsichore, the Muse of Dance and Song](#)

[CHAPTER THREE Erato, the Muse of Erotic Poetry and Mime](#)

[CHAPTER FOUR Urania, the Muse of Astronomy](#)

[CHAPTER FIVE Calliope, the Muse of Epic Poetry](#)

[CHAPTER SIX Euterpe, the Muse of Lyric Poetry](#)

[CHAPTER SEVEN Polymnia, the Muse of Divine Hymns](#)

[CHAPTER EIGHT Melpomene, the Muse of Tragedy](#)

[CHAPTER NINE Clio, the Muse of History](#)

[CHAPTER TEN Holmesia, the Muse of Deductive Reasoning](#)

[About the Author](#)

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

The quotations used as chapter headings are taken from *The Golden Ass* of Lucius Apuleius in William Adlington's translation edited by F.J. Harvey Darton, printed with permission of Chas. J. Sawyer and the Navarre Society, 1 Grafton Street, London W1X 3LB.

# CHAPTER ONE

## **Thalia, the Muse of Comedy**

“When I had done this, and was departing away, one of my companions, and fellow at Athens . . . fortunèd to pass by, and viewing me a good space, in the end brought me to his remembrance . . .”

There had been a time (but it seemed to her to belong to a previous existence) when Dame Beatrice had been followed about by strange men. In those days, however, she had been a black-haired, brilliant-eyed siren, ugly, vivacious, unfashionably thin, and small, but possessing an attractiveness which, although entirely divorced from physical beauty, exercised a kind of electric current upon most of those who came in contact with her. It accounted for her popularity with both sexes and with all age-groups and it probably accounted (in both senses) for the three husbands who had predeceased her.

On the present occasion there was no doubt she was being stalked, although the hunter, this time, was no incipient Romeo, but a mild, scholarly-looking little man wearing badly-creased trousers and with the rest of his apparel concealed beneath a buttoned-up raincoat. Moreover, the venue was no open prairie or primeval forest, still less a lonely country lane or a blasted heath. It was, of

all unlikely stamping-grounds for a prowler, the chaste and lofty halls of the British Museum.

Dame Beatrice was there less as a student than as a fugitive from the rain and as a concession to the unreliable March weather. When she had entered her London clinic to pay a periodical visit to the staff there, the sun had been shining and a boisterous breeze was chasing light clouds across a faint and misty-blue sky, but when she left, not more than two hours later, the wind had dropped and heavy rain was falling. She had no waterproof coat and could see no cruising taxi, so she made for the nearest public shelter. This happened to be the museum.

She had been standing in front of the so-called Strangford Apollo when she first became aware of the little man. At first she was unaffected by his presence, deeming him to be a chance visitor, as she was herself, but when she found him standing almost at her elbow when she was looking at the Parthenon frieze, and just behind her while she studied the classical sculptures on the marble column-drums from the temple of the Ephesian Diana, she began to wonder whether this dogging of her footsteps might not be calculated, and that he was trying to make up his mind to speak to her.

To test this she went to look at some black-figure pottery; a narrow-necked lekythos; a broader-necked amphora with its two handles; a bowl-like skythos. From these she turned to some painted drinking-cups. There was one by the Panaiticus artist which portrayed Amazons; there was another of Aphrodite by the Pistoxinus painter; there was a third which depicted Hippomedon attacking the serpent which killed the baby Archemorus. This was attributed to the Sotades painter and Dame Beatrice looked at it closely, not so much because it particularly attracted her interest as in the hope that, by doing so, she would either outstay her pursuer or force him to declare himself.

It was of no use. When she went back on her tracks to a frieze from the temple of Apollo at Phigalea which she had already studied, the man was still with her. When she lingered in front of the statue of Demeter from Cnidus, so did he. She returned to some early Greek sculptures—the women on the Harpy tomb; a self-satisfied, smirking, crimp-haired, marble kouros; a headless, primitive, seated figure from Miletus; her first love, the formalised, improbable Apollo. The persistent shadow was with her wherever she went.

Dame Beatrice possessed a wide circle of friends and acquaintances. Many of the latter derived from her practice, for she was a consultant psychiatrist of international note. She was also, in her capacity of psychiatric adviser to the Home Office, not unknown to the criminal classes. Her family ramifications were many, and she had met more of her relatives' friends and their friends' friends than she could well remember. She began to think that the faithful little man must know her, but as he made no attempt to speak and as nothing stirred in her mind concerning him, she went to the ground floor of the King Edward VII gallery and looked out into the street. The rain had stopped and there was a cruising taxi. She hailed it and was about to give the driver the address of her Kensington house when the little man manifested himself once more. He raised his hat.

"Do forgive me for accosting you, but it *is* Mrs. Bradley—I should say Dame Beatrice—is it not?" he asked. His voice and his deprecating manner gave Dame Beatrice her cue.

"Dear me! Mr. Ronald Dick, surely?" she said. "This is most delightful. I was just about to go home to lunch. Is it possible that you can join me?"

"It was the strangest and most fortunate occurrence that I should have seen you in the museum," said Ronald Dick,

seated at table with his hostess in her handsome dining-room. "I was longing to speak to you, but I perceived that you did not recognise me and my courage failed until I realised that you were about to vanish from my ken." He smiled diffidently. "I had been thinking about you, and there you were."

"It often happens that way, in my experience," said Dame Beatrice. "It is so nice to see you again after all these years. I saw the announcement of Sir Rudri's death, but have lost touch with the family."

"Marie Hopkinson is living in Switzerland and the sons are in America. It was about Sir Rudri, in a way, that I wanted to speak to you. He had planned another of his extraordinary pilgrimages, you know, and death claimed him before he could carry it out. I have often felt that I owed it to his memory—he was extremely kind to me in his way—but until now, there has been no opportunity . . ."

"To carry out his wishes?"

"Yes. At last, however, I can see my way clear. I am gathering together a small party to visit some of the shrines and temples of Apollo in Greece and on the islands."

"Oh, that is what Rudri had in mind?"

"Yes. I suppose—this is what I wanted to ask you, if I may venture to do so—I suppose you would not care to come along with us?"

"When would this be?"

"We want to leave some time next month or at the beginning of May."

"And of whom does the party consist?"

"With me will be my ward Hero and my adopted son Simonides—both Greek—well, half Greek. Then there are Chloe Cowie the novelist and her niece Mary, Henry Owen the botanist and his two sons, Edmund and Roger, accompanied by Julian Suffolk, their tutor. I think you would find the company agreeable."



"I wonder whether they would find me equally agreeable?"

"I could arrange a meeting before you made up your mind. I should be so relieved and delighted if you would come. My ward is young—only twenty years old—and Mrs. Cowie, although a delightful woman, is *not*, to my mind, very reliable."

"Why should she need to be?"

"Well, with six young people in the party, an older woman would be a great asset, and I don't think Chloe would be an adequate chaperone. She has always been somewhat scatter-brained and, like all writers, she is inclined to be self-centred."

"You appear to have made a study of her," said Dame Beatrice, amused.

"I am thinking of making her an offer of marriage," said Ronald Dick, simply.

"Oh, I see. Well, it is an excellent beginning to realise that she has faults as well as virtues. How old are Mr. Owen's sons?"

"Seventeen and fourteen, I believe. They are being privately educated, which is not, in my opinion, the best preparation for boys who will have to earn a living. However, they are to go to University later, if they attain the required standard. Meanwhile, Henry wishes them to travel, but prefers to keep them under his eye, so they are coming with us to Greece."

"And the tutor? Is he not a capable man, then?"

"I have not met him, and only once have I met the girl, Mary Cowie, but both, I believe, are very young."

Dame Beatrice met the other members of the expedition a week later at an informal get-together arranged by Dick at his flat in Poole. She had been frank with him when she accepted his invitation to join the gathering.

"I can afford the time," she said, "and, as my secretary is taking a Sabbatical six months' leave to be with her family, I shall not be contributing to medical journals or beginning my new book until she returns. All the same, I should prefer not to be too hasty in promising to join you in Greece."

Dick's flat overlooked Poole Bay, and from its balcony could be seen the castle and woods of Brownsea Island, the long spit of Sandbanks, and, on the other side of the ferry, the end of South Haven Point and the sand-dunes of Shell Bay. The balcony was sufficiently sheltered on a fine sunny afternoon for Dame Beatrice and the two young women to sit out on it for an hour after lunch while Dick and his adopted son washed the dishes and the tutor accompanied his charges for a stroll along the shores of the shallow bay. Chloe Cowie and Henry Owen had left in Henry's car for the famous Compton Acres gardens near Flag Head Chine and were to return later, when Henry would pick up Julian Suffolk and the boys and take them back to their hotel.

"A reversal of the historic roles of the sexes," said Dame Beatrice, referring to the washing-up. "I noticed, Miss Metoulides, that you did not make any protest."

"I have no liking for the domestic chores, and Papa Ronald does not break the plates and glasses. I *always* break the plates and glasses, therefore it is better that he washes them and not I," said the black-haired girl, flashing Dame Beatrice a warm, conspiratorial smile. "It is a lesson I learnt when I was very small and living for two years in Cheltenham. My foster-mother required me to help neighbours by pushing their babies out in little chairs on wheels to make ourselves a few pence because, of course, we were poor. But the babies, with me, they seemed to overturn their little push-chairs, so I was not allowed to take them out any more, and then my foster-mother married again and I went back to Greece with Papa Ronald. Much nicer there."

"Oh, I wouldn't a bit mind taking babies out," said Mary Cowie, a nondescript blonde girl with serious eyes. "It would be better than doing my aunt's typing and having to read aloud to her from her own ghastly books so that she can 'enjoy the cadences' of her involved and precious prose." She spoke with extreme bitterness. "Of course I'd really prefer to do no work at all. I suppose we all would."

"I wonder," said Dame Beatrice, "what we should do with it if we had infinite leisure? Should we not end up like the lotus eaters, dead to all sense of time and reality?"

"I wouldn't, perhaps, so much mind working," said Mary, "if it could be work of my own choosing."

"You can become a lotus eater on drugs," said Hero. "As for me, I work very hard in my own way. I understudy the stars."

"Study the stars? You mean you're an astronomer?" said Mary. "That must be awfully interesting." She did not sound as though she thought so. Dame Beatrice had been aware, almost from the moment she had met them, that there was, if not antipathy, at least a lack of sympathy between the two girls, of whom Mary was slightly the older.

"Astronomy is for men," declared Hero. "I do not mean *those* stars. Orion, Casseopaea, the Cyclades—what are they to me?"

"The Cyclades are Greek islands," said Mary, infuriatingly tolerant of ignorance.

"Of course," retorted Hero. "Andros, Tinos, Mykonos, Delos, Skyros—we go there with Papa Ronald. I am talking about the other stars, the modern Greek stars. Mouskouri, Staylas, Cotopoulis, Paxinou, Dimitriades, Drossinis, Gryparis, Kazantzakis, Kephalinos, Malacassis, Solomos, Riadis, Rok, Sikelianos (both Angelos and Eva), Skalkotas, far back Theotocopoulos (you call him *el Greco*) first of the moderns, and others, very numerous."

"The whole alphabet, in fact," said Mary, less tolerantly and with some contempt.

"I congratulate you, Miss Metoulides," said Dame Beatrice, deeming it wise to break in.

"That we have so many famous ones?"

"That, of course. I meant that you study singers, dancers, actors, poets, and painters, instead of rebels, patriots, and politicians."

"Those are for men. Women would not be interested."

"In England," said Mary, "we don't make these invidious distinctions."

"Between men and women? But biology has made the distinction for you," retorted Hero.

"Biology has nothing to do with politics, patriotism, or the arts."

"You think not? Where, then, are your women politicians?"

"We have a number of them in the House of Commons, and some hold ministerial posts."

"But not becoming prime minister, eh? Patriots?"

"Every Englishwoman is a patriot."

"She is like the Spartan mothers, sending her sons to the war—'*with* this or *on* it'—proud they die?—or in battle herself to die?"

"There was Edith Cavell."

"Who said, 'Patriotism is not enough.' I am sad at you for your arguments. As for the arts, where, then, among women, are the major poets, the dramatists, the painters?"

"What about the great women novelists?"

"Ah, those, yes, but they are like the great actresses. They are interpreters only. The novel is not an art-form."

"What about sculpture, then? What about Barbara Hepworth?"

"If you like big holes, yes, she is significant."

"Henry Moore makes big holes, as you call them."

"Agreed, but he is better—he is superb—when he do *not* make big holes."

"You're referring to his earlier work, of course."

"Of course. By 1950 he is thinking like Picasso. Great pity."

"Don't talk such nonsense!"

"What, then, is *Helmet Number Three*? What, then, is *Standing Figure* with two little horn-heads and tilted pelvic girdle? Compare, please, with Picasso of 1929, *Girl on the Seashore*. No resemblance?"

"Not the very slightest. You can't compare sculpture with painting, anyway," said Mary stoutly, unwilling to acknowledge that she was not conversant with any of the masterpieces mentioned. Dame Beatrice intervened again.

"I think," she said, "that to argue with the Greeks is profitless, my dear Miss Cowie. They are, by tradition, debaters, city-dwellers, rebels, whereas we slower-witted English are nostalgic for our two acres and a cow. This being so, we tolerate our neighbours only so long as they do not argue with us. Our utmost desire is to 'keep ourselves to ourselves' and to leave civilised disputation to the Order of Preachers."

The slightly uncivilised disputation between the two girls was also interrupted by the entrance on to the balcony of Dick and the twenty-year-old Simonides.

"Not cold out here?" asked Dick.

"Miss Metoulides has been keeping us warmed up with a feast of reason . . ." began Dame Beatrice.

"If not a flow of soul," said Mary. Simonides, a thin, wavy-haired, sinuous youth with sad but aristocratic features and large, expressive hands, seated himself on the basketwork settee beside Mary and exclaimed.

"I am all soul! Without soul I do not exist. What are your views, Dame Beatrice?"

"With regard to souls, I entertain none. Their existence I regard as doubtful, their possession, if they do exist, an encumbrance, their destination equivocal, it seems."

"You are atheist?"

"Oh, no, I am open-minded, I hope, but I am not a lover of nebulae."

"More of these astronomer's stars!" said Hero, disgustedly.

"So you will come to Greece, to this cult of Apollo, and you are open-minded about him, too? It is a broad view, which I like!" exclaimed Simonides.

"Talking of Apollo," said Mary, "I still don't know what we're going to do in Greece. What is our object supposed to be? My aunt is her usual enthusiastic self, but talks with her usual vagueness about what we're after."

"You come and help me make sandwiches for tea, and I tell you all about it," said Simonides. "Also I disclose to you my soul."

"He makes fun for himself," said Hero, when the two had retreated to the kitchen. "Well, he thinks so. He will find the English rose has sharper thorns than he likes. Let us go inside. It is becoming cold out here. And you," she added, stretching out an exquisite hand to Dame Beatrice, "I would like you to call me Hero. This is to make our friendship beautiful. I think old women are better than young ones. They are kinder; also, they do not compete, and one can be at rest with them."

"They vary," said Dame Beatrice. "Some are oil, some vinegar, and most of them are a mixture of the two in varying proportions. But let us go inside, as you suggest. Perhaps you will show me how to play the lyra." She had noticed the small lute, instrument of ancient lineage but different from the classic lyre, lying on a side table which they had passed on their way out to the balcony. As they entered the room, Dick, finding himself *de trop* in the kitchen, joined them.

"Ah, yes," said Hero, with a wide smile, "I will play and when I play Simon will dance, and then that little English rose finds she has to finish making the sandwiches by herself. Be seated, dear friend, in the armchair, and I shall

switch on the electric fire for your ancient bones, like so, and clear a space in this nice large room for Simonides, a very vigorous dancer, and he will come in, and then you will see and hear."

She cleared a wide space, then settled Dame Beatrice solicitously in a comfortable position by the fire, pulled forward a chair for Dick, seated herself on a stool, and, picking up the lyra and its bow, began to fiddle on the strings with great rapidity and furious energy, producing a strongly rhythmic tune. In less than two minutes the door opened and in came Simonides.

"Good, good!" he exclaimed. "Excuse! I take off my trousers." He shed these at lightning speed and flung off his jacket, his shirt, his shoes, and his socks. "Begin again. I wish all of the tune. My soul demands it."

The door, which he had slammed shut, opened again. Mary, like some outraged Clytemnestra, stood framed in the opening, breadknife in hand. At the spectacle of a young man clad in nothing but a pair of bright golden underpants, however, she blenched and retreated. Simonides nodded to Hero and poised himself for the dance.

Mary's indignation at being left so summarily to finish the task in hand resulted in her producing a bad tempered mountain of sandwiches, far too many, Dame Beatrice thought, until she saw the inroads made on them by Edmund, Roger, and their tutor when they came in. Edmund Owen was a chunky, swarthy boy, broadshouldered, of average height, and interested in nothing but Rugby football. He played prop forward for the Welsh village nearest to his home, for the Owens lived in Wales. For him, Dame Beatrice thought, to be privately taught would not amount to a handicap, since some aspects, at least, of his education would be attended to by the other members of the team, dedicated in equal parts to dismembering their

opponents, attending chapel on Sundays, making certain that the landlords of “home and away” pubs remained solvent, and seeing that the local girls did not carry the stigma of virginity to the grave.

His brother, the fourteen-year-old Roger, was of a make and shape so different that it was difficult to believe they came of the same parentage. He was slightly taller than his elder brother, fair, whereas Edmund was as dark as a Spaniard, and so slightly built as to give an appearance of fragility. Later, Dame Beatrice was to discover that he could run like a hare and climb like a mountain goat, but all that was apparent at tea-time to give the lie to his looks was that he had the appetite of a boa-constrictor and a warped sense of humour. Towards his elders, apart from this, he displayed the wary defensiveness of a stray cat in a strange alley.

The brothers, it was clear, formed a mutual admiration society, Roger informing Dame Beatrice with pride that Edmund had had to begin shaving nearly two years previously and Edmund reciprocating with the information that Roger had “done” the thirty-three peaks of the Cuillins, including Sgurr Alasdair, before he was thirteen. Neither boy paid the slightest attention to either of the girls, but their tutor was less inhibited. Unfortunately for Mary, both Julian and Simon found Hero the more attractive of the two, and paid her more attention than was either strictly necessary or, in Mary’s presence, particularly polite.

Julian Suffolk was a tall, brown-haired man aged twenty-three. He had a quirky, lop-sided smile, blue eyes, and a manner of speech so slow that it seemed an affectation. He had tried teaching in a prep. school and then had entertained thoughts of joining the police, but Henry Owen’s advertisement had tempted him into deciding that by becoming a private tutor there was a chance he would be able to combine the more desirable aspects of both these professions while being free from the disadvantages of either.



His pupils tolerated him and proved to be untroublesome and reasonably intelligent, his employer gave him a free hand with them, and he found himself with enough spare time to go in for a little free-lance literary work. He was looking forward to the excursion to Greece chiefly because he had seen in it the opportunity of obtaining copy for a novel he was planning. When he met Hero Metoulides it occurred to him that the jaunt might have other possibilities of an equally desirable nature but of a different kind, and he was not overjoyed when Simonides also showed a marked preference for the Greek girl.

Tea was over before the last two members of the party came back from their expedition, so Ronald Dick bustled about to provide for them, and it was not long before Dame Beatrice realised that another scene in this springtime comedy was about to be played, the participants being the two older men.

Henry Owen had certain advantages over Ronald Dick. Dick was small (physically insignificant, in fact), spectacled, and nervous. Owen was not only tall; he was magnificently leonine, fair (like his younger son), bearded in a dashing manner, deep-voiced, self-confident and full of strange, if innocuous, oaths. Against this (as it happened), Dick had been left a considerable fortune by his grandmother, whereas Owen was, by comparison, only fairly comfortably endowed; and whereas Dick stood an even chance of disposing of his human encumbrances in the not-so-far distant future, for both were twenty years old, Owen, for some years to come, would be hampered by having to share his home with his sons. Apart from these considerations, whether, supposing she intended to marry either of them, the widowed Chloe Cowie would prefer to walk rough-shod over the solicitous Dick or be bullied and ruled by the magisterial Owen was anybody's guess at the moment. That Chloe herself was prepared to enjoy the contest, however, was clear enough and could not be disputed.

She was a tall, powerfully-built woman with dark-brown hair and cold, grey eyes, and she had a clear laugh which she employed often, sometimes unnecessarily. She was apt to refer to herself as a business-woman and it was true that her novels brought her more than a competence and that her investments were always well-advised. She cultivated (unconsciously, perhaps) the streak of cruelty in her nature and was full of guileless self-approval, the more so in compensation for the lack of approval extended to her novels by certain reviewers and by some of her fellow-authors. She was adept at re-hashing the plots of others with just sufficient skill to avoid the stigma of being labelled plagiarist, composed her books at great speed and with only moderate attention to grammatical accuracy, had extremely beautiful hands and feet, and possessed considerable animal magnetism for certain types of men. Women, on the whole, disliked her, and with some justification, although, paradoxically, it was mostly women who read and enjoyed her novels. Dame Beatrice had a feeling that she knew her.

Hero had abandoned her music and Simonides his dancing before Chloe and Owen appeared. The table and chairs had been put back into their accustomed places and Ronald Dick had gone into the kitchen to make a fresh pot of tea for the newcomers.

"We do have a maid," he said, in response to a laughing enquiry from Chloe, "but this is her free afternoon. At least, it isn't, because she usually takes tomorrow, but she particularly asked for today, so I let her have it."

"She is a lazy creature," said Hero, "and I think she invents an excuse when she hears of so many visitors. Never mind! Miss Cowie cut all the sandwiches and I shall leave our nasty lazy woman all the washing-up after dinner, so I hope you will use lots of knives and forks and spoons and plates, and we pile the dishes right up to the ceiling, so that there is a great deal for her to do. We cannot have two lazy people in this flat, and I am the other one."

Dame Beatrice had declined an invitation to dine at the flat and soon took her leave. Before she made her farewells, however, Ronald Dick took her aside and asked her whether or not she had made up her mind to join the expedition to Greece.

"You have now met the full strength of the company," he said, "but, if you would prefer time to consider, I could arrange another meeting. The Cowies live in Christchurch, and so are near at hand and would make themselves available, I am certain, but Owen's party have come from Wales especially for this small social occasion and have booked their hotel rooms only for the rest of this week, so another meeting, if we are to include everybody, would need to be very soon."

"So far as I am concerned," said Dame Beatrice, "my mind is fully made up. I shall be delighted to make one of your number. If you will let me have some idea of a possible date for the beginning of our pilgrimage, I will arrange to book my passage to Piraeus in time to meet your deadline. I shall go by sea. I much prefer cruising to flying, and I dislike railway travel, except for short journeys in England. By the way, I have a curious feeling that I have met Mrs. Cowie somewhere before, but my memory refuses to aid me."

"I do not think you have met her before," said Dick, looking somewhat embarrassed. "She probably reminds you of Megan Hopkinson, whose niece she is. Olwen, Megan's older sister, married a man named Bosfield. They had one child, this charming Chloe, who so closely resembles her aunt. As for Chloe herself, I am told that she is the widow of someone called Cowie. That is—er—well, that is the whole story."

"I see," said Dame Beatrice. She made no comment, but decided in her own mind—for she had marked the hesitation—that it might be the story, but that it was anything but the whole story, and the thought intrigued her.

Somewhat to the surprise of Dame Beatrice, some of the party had also chosen to travel by sea. She found that she was to be accompanied on the voyage by Chloe Cowie and Mary, and by Hero, Roger, and the tutor.

The ship was to leave from Southampton and would call at Gibraltar, Naples, Palermo, and Iraklion before it turned north to Piraeus for Athens, where Dick, Owen, Edmund, and Simonides would be waiting. Their flight had been so arranged as to give Dick time to complete the plans for the Apollo pilgrimage before the ship's party disembarked.

Dame Beatrice was still incompletely informed as to the extent and object of this pilgrimage. Apart from a vague impression that it was to start from Delos, the legendary birthplace of the god Apollo and his sister Artemis, who were the children of Leto by Zeus and born under a palm-tree on the island, she neither knew nor cared to what bournes the party would travel after that, nor how many of the shrines and temples on the islands and the mainland were to be visited. Her own object was to spend a slightly unusual holiday in interesting if not necessarily compatible company, and she looked forward, in any case, as much to the voyage as to its aftermath.

She embarked at a quarter to four on the appointed day to find that tea was being served in the most spacious of the lounges. The passengers' luggage was still being lowered in huge nets on to the main deck, and a glance into her cabin indicated that her own trunk and suitcases had not yet been delivered, so she went into the largest lounge, wondering how soon she might find herself encountering the rest of her party. Chloe, Mary, and Hero would drive to the docks in hired cars from Christchurch and Poole respectively, she supposed. Roger and Julian, who had spent a few days in London after seeing Dick and Henry, Edmund, and Simon off from the airport, would come in from Waterloo on the boat train.

There was a fair sprinkling of passengers at tea, but a cursory glance around convinced her that she was acquainted with none of them. This was all to the good, since she held that an essential ingredient of any enjoyable holiday is to avoid those people with whom one is constantly or even only intermittently in contact during one's ordinary life, but among these she did not include her fellow-pilgrims, for, apart from meeting with them at Ronald Dick's flat, she had no knowledge of them whatever, except for the cursory illusion that somewhere and at some time she had met Chloe Cowie; but Dick had explained that.

With the arrival of the boat-train from London the lounge filled up rapidly, and she had just accepted a second cup of tea from an ample and prosperous-looking woman who had constituted herself "mother" at the table for four where Dame Beatrice had settled herself, when in from the promenade deck came Roger and Julian. The tutor said a word to his charge and then retreated. Dame Beatrice waved a skinny claw to indicate to the boy that there was a vacant seat at her table. Roger smiled with relief, waved back, and she made room for him on the settee beside her.

"Your grandson, I assume," said the ample woman, beaming. "Milk and sugar, young man?"

"Yes, please, two lumps," said Roger. "Dame Beatrice isn't my grandmother. I only wish she were."

"Well, I'm sure that's very charmingly put," commented the beaming woman. "Perhaps we should introduce ourselves. I am Amelia Dearwater and this is my husband Percival."

"I am Beatrice Lestrangle Bradley. This is my friend, Mr. Roger Owen," said Dame Beatrice, dignifying the boy in a way she knew he would appreciate.

"Dame Beatrice? Oh, I know your name quite well. Do you play bridge? No? What a pity. I want to make up a foursome as soon as I can find the right people. Percival doesn't play, either, but I think the time between lunch and

tea, and between tea and dinner, can be so dreadfully dull, don't you, on board ship, if one doesn't find something to do?"

Dame Beatrice observed mendaciously that she thought she would be taking a short rest during those periods which had been mentioned. Shortly after this, Mrs. Dearwater, having ascertained that her husband had finished his tea, took him away to their cabin.

"I say," said Roger, helping himself to potted meat sandwiches, "do we have to know her? I don't think she'll be much fun."

"As there are at least a thousand passengers on board, I doubt whether we shall set eyes on her again," Dame Beatrice assured him. "What about Mr. Suffolk? Would he not like some tea?"

"He's gone down to the dining saloon to see about a table. He wants to make sure that the chief steward puts all of our party together, I expect. We're bound to get two others with us, though, to fill in. I took a look, and most of the tables seem to be for fours or eights, and there are only six of us."

"Is he an enterprising man?"

"Not very. How do you mean?"

"I seem to remember, from my study of a plan of the ship, that there are a number of tables for two."

"Oh, golly! I don't want to be stuck with only *him* at every meal!"

"No, of course not," said Dame Beatrice, who had not been thinking of this particular partnership. "Do help yourself to more sandwiches. They look extremely good."

Shortly after this they were joined by Julian.

"I've fixed up a table for us. Quite good, but we shall have two others with us, I'm afraid," he said. "We sit where we please at breakfast, and tea is always served up here or on deck, but for lunch and dinner it's table thirty-six, the first sitting, if that's all right, Dame Beatrice."

“It is kind of you to have made the arrangements, Mr. Suffolk. Well, I think, while you are taking tea, I will go and see whether my luggage is in my cabin.”

Her cabin—the party had made their bookings separately—was a stateroom on A deck and had its own bathroom. The reservations had been made so late that nothing but the dearest and the very cheapest of the one-class accommodation had been left, and, even at that, there had been very little choice. She had no idea where the rest of the party were to sleep, but supposed that she would hear in due course. Meanwhile, she was well-satisfied with her own quarters, found that there was ample space for herself and her possessions, unpacked, and then was about to take a stroll on deck when there was a tap on the door. A messenger from the shore had brought her a magnificent bouquet of dark red carnations. A card was attached. It was dated for some days previously and bore the signature of Ronald Dick. He had placed the order for the flowers just before his aeroplane left for Athens, with instructions for the date of their delivery. Dame Beatrice thought it very handsome of him.

The messenger had been followed by her cabin steward, a grey-haired, gravely solicitous man, who brought with him her stewardess, a round-faced, capable-looking woman of about thirty-five. Dame Beatrice gave instructions about early tea, and, in turn, had her attention drawn to the whereabouts of her life-jacket and the necessity for parading on deck in this uncouth adjunct and proceeding to her appointed boat-station whenever she was called upon to do so.

“Travelling alone, madam?” (The stateroom was intended for two persons.)

“So far as this cabin is concerned, yes, I am travelling alone, but I have several friends on board.”

“I hope you will be very comfortable, madam. If you press the bell once for the stewardess, twice for me, we will

be with you in no time at all. Any hour of the day or night, madam, we shall be on call."

"That is very reassuring," said Dame Beatrice. She dispensed reimbursement for the reassurance and, her myrmidons departing, she finished tidying up and then put on her coat, tied a scarf over her hair, and went out on to the deck. The ship was not yet under way. On one side were the wharves and customs sheds of Southampton Docks. On the other side there was a wide stretch of calm and oily water with a prospect beyond it of a low, green, uninteresting-looking shore.

She descended to the deck below. The open-air pool had no water in it. Further exploration revealed deck tennis courts without their nets, white-painted lines marking out other deck sports, a small, well-equipped gymnasium, a children's playroom, smaller lounges including a writing-room and the ship's library, two bars (both closed), an adjoining smoking-room, the ship's shop and hairdressing saloons, a drying-room, the ship's hospital, a covered swimming pool of Pompeian luxuriousness, various companionways, and what appeared to be miles of corridors partitioned off at intervals by fireproof doors which were open to allow the free passage of stewards and passengers.

She located the dining-saloon and went to inspect table thirty-six. On her way back to her stateroom she met Chloe and Mary. They greeted her rather perfunctorily and asked whether she had had tea. She reassured them and was informed that Chloe did not propose to do more than drink a half-bottle of a good dry champagne and then would remain in her cabin until the morning with Mary to attend on her in case she felt any malaise.

Before Dame Beatrice had completed her tour of the ship, the cruise had begun. She went on deck to see the vague green landscape slipping away to starboard and, on the opposite shore, the dwindling figures of people on the dockside waving farewell to their friends. Of Hero so far



there had been no sign. However, she turned up for dinner and announced that Chloe and Mary were taking theirs in their cabin.

"A little soup and a morsel of fish," she said, imitating Chloe's rich voice. "That poor Mary! Sometimes I think I am unkind to despise her. What are we going to drink?"

The ship was bound for Israel, and there were several parties of Jewish passengers on board. Some of these, especially the younger ones, were lively, and, on the whole, they all appeared to do well at the various innocuous gambling games which formed part of the entertainment, so much so that Roger won various sums of money at the ship's dog-racing deck-game simply by noting which of the wooden animals was most favoured by the Jews and putting his stake on it. A couple of magnificent swimmers were apt to monopolise the outdoor pool at certain times of the day, and there were several very accomplished dancers. Apart from this, Dame Beatrice made a new acquaintance. This was a small fat Jewess who was travelling with her daughter, a quiet, dark-eyed, beautiful girl in her early twenties.

The mother, a Mrs. Solomons, finding herself seated on deck next to Dame Beatrice on the third afternoon out, opened the conversation. Dame Beatrice knew her name because people on board had been talking about her fabulous jewellery.

"Your rings are good," Mrs. Solomons pronounced. Dame Beatrice stretched out a yellow claw and the emeralds and diamonds on her skinny fingers blazed green fire and rainbow fire in the brilliant afternoon sunshine.

"Yes, quite good," she agreed.

"You lock your stateroom door at night?"

"No. Do you think I should?"

"I lock mine. You see my rings and this watch?"

"Yes, indeed. I also noticed your rubies when you were watching the dancing last night."

“My husband would kill himself if my rubies were stolen. He did not want Leah and me to come on this cruise, but, when I was set on it, he begged me not to take my jewels.”

“He did not think of coming with you to protect them?”

“He wishes to play golf. I ask you! What is golf?”

“It has always seemed to me merely a method of taking a little ball for a long walk.”

“Yes. And then you lose the little ball in the rough, and next day, maybe, you buy it back again from some cheeky boy who has found it. So I tell him I am coming on this ship. I have relatives in Israel. I wish to visit them. Of what use to travel, if I don’t bring my jewels? But, all the time, I am afraid. I am desperately afraid. You see, someone might kill me for my rubies, and then Aaron would kill himself, partly for me and mostly for the rubies.”

“Why do you not entrust them to the purser? You could still have them back from him to wear in the evenings, and then he would lock them up again.” Dame Beatrice calmly put forward this reasonable suggestion, only to have it violently repudiated.

“No. I will keep them with me, always with me. I trust nobody. Look at this watch? Have you ever seen one so good? I think not.” She took it off her wrist and handed it over. “Trust even this—many hundred pounds it cost—to the purser? I think not. No, indeed!”

“I do not think I have ever seen one so valuable,” said Dame Beatrice, handing back the watch, “but I think ‘good’ is a relative term when one applies it to anything mechanical. My own”—she passed it across—“is probably as good a timekeeper, but I do not think it cost as much as yours.”

To her surprise and amusement, Mrs. Solomons took a watchmaker’s glass from her capacious handbag and opened and scrutinised the watch before she returned it.

“A nice watch,” she said approvingly. “Very nice. My husband is in the business, so I know watches, and my

brother Laban is in jewels, so I know stones. Do you really think it would be wise to place my rubies with the purser? You don't think it would be too big a temptation to a young fellow earning a small salary?"

"I believe the Company's pursers are chosen for their sea-green incorruptibility," said Dame Beatrice solemnly.

"Anyone green is not the person to take charge of valuables."

At this moment Leah Solomons, her flawless brown limbs set off by a white bikini, came up beside her mother and said,

"I'm going to have a swim now, mother. Will you be here until tea?"

"This lady thinks I should ask the purser to lock up my rubies," said Mrs. Solomons, ignoring both the statement and the question.

"This lady is Dame Beatrice Lestrangle Bradley, and of course you ought to let the purser take charge of your rubies. That way we might both get some sleep at night. I don't know what Daddy would say if he knew you'd brought them with you," said her daughter. She sauntered to the edge of the pool, tensed her body and dived faultlessly in.

"She is a good girl," said Mrs. Solomons indulgently, "but she bosses me like I was the child. They have no respect nowadays. So you are Dame Beatrice? I saw your name on the passenger list. How did you get it? Why did they make you D.B.E.?"

"For services to the Home Office, I think."

"You are a high-up policewoman?"

"No, a consultant psychiatrist."

"A number of people on this ship need their heads looked at, I think. That Mrs. Dearwater, for instance."

"Really? I met her at tea on the day we embarked. She seemed perfectly normal."

"She plays bridge for small threepences. She asked me to make up a four."

"She asked me, too, but I do not care for bridge."

"I like to play, but not for chicken-feed. At home we have a club. We skin each other clean." She chuckled richly. "Threepences!" she repeated. "Are you going to shop when we get to Gibraltar?"

"No. I doubt whether I shall even go ashore."

"Perhaps wise. All the trouble to dodge the Customs when one gets back. Hardly worth the bother and anxiety."

"One can always look pleasant and declare the goods, of course."

"*Pay* on them? Of what use, then, is the cheap Gibraltar price?"

Dame Beatrice did not go ashore at Gibraltar. The ship was to stay there for a matter of four hours only, so there was no time to do anything but shop, and there was nothing which she felt inclined to buy. She was by no means the only passenger who remained on board. Those who remained lay about in deck-chairs or retired to their cabins. The outdoor pool was not used while the ship was in port, but, in any case, most of the younger people had gone ashore. She had seen Hero and Julian disembark, but the others in their party had evidently decided to remain aboard. She saw nothing of Chloe Cowie and her niece, but Roger came up to where she was reclining in her deck-chair. He appeared to be at a loose end, so at his request she accompanied him to the ship's gymnasium, where he bicycled away to the point of giving himself an apoplectic fit and then treated her to a vigorous display of ball-punching.

"*That* ought to get my weight back to normal," he said. "I'm eating far too much on this trip. Did you know it's to be a gala dinner tomorrow night, with prizes for the best fancy-dress costumes concocted on board? I wish you'd come along to our cabin while Suffolk isn't there, and help me to get some clothes sorted out. He hates it if I chuck stuff all

over the place, so now is my opportunity. What are *you* going to go as? Have you thought of anything? Perhaps we could go as a double, if you've got any good ideas."

"I doubt whether it would be to your advantage to take me as your partner, but I will give thought to the matter."

They were taking tea on deck when Mrs. Solomons came up to them.

"I have taken your advice," she said, "while we are in port. I have left my rubies with the purser. He gives Leah a receipt for them. I take them out again for the dance tomorrow night. I let everybody know where they are, so I get plenty of sleep tonight, not worrying about them. You did better not to go ashore. Everybody is shopping very foolishly, and these shopkeepers, they know we are in a great hurry, so there is no chance of beating them down for prices. Take it or leave it, they say, so there is no fun about it and I come back to the ship for my tea."

"Can't she bear to miss a meal she's paid for?" asked Roger, gazing after the plump little figure of the Jewess as she padded along to the lounge.

"Well, we couldn't bear to miss one, either," Dame Beatrice pointed out. There was much comparison of purchases and prices when the shoppers returned to the ship, then the evening passed normally, with dancing for those who desired it and a film show for those who did not. On the following day there was an invasion of the ship's shop, especially for crêpe paper and fancy headgear, and, during the afternoon, a scarcity of people on deck or in the lounges, since preparations for the fancy-dress party involved the time and attention of the majority of the passengers.

The first sitting for dinner was at half-past six, half an hour earlier than usual, the second sitting was due to end at half-past eight, and the fancy-dress parade which would precede the dance was timed for half-past nine. Gala programmes, containing the dinner menu (which was even

more elaborate than usual) and items of information concerning the rest of the ports of call and other matters of interest, were placed on the tables and, in an atmosphere of champagne and general conviviality, were circulated around the dining-tables for signatures.

By a quarter past seven Dame Beatrice had finished her dinner and had retired to her cabin to put the finishing touches to a costume for Roger. She had declined to partner him, but had concocted, with his advice and assistance, a representation of Neptune which involved his wearing a crown, a red beard, and (at his insistence) frogmen's flippers and a snorkel tube. Her help had been requested in sewing hundreds of blue and green scales on to a pair of Hero's tights and a string vest of Roger's own, and at the moment when the tap came at her stateroom door she was involved in making sure that the prongs of Neptune's trident stayed upright on their parent handle.

"Come in," she said, thinking it was the boy. Her steward entered.

"Commander's compliments, madam, and could you make it convenient to spare him a moment in Commander's dayroom?"

"Certainly," said Dame Beatrice, hoping that she was not going to be co-opted on to some committee or other.

"If you ask *me*, madam, something's *Up*," said the steward confidentially.

"It would seem so. Will you direct me? I have no idea where to find the Commander's dayroom."

She was ushered into it to find it occupied by a tearful Mrs. Solomons, her daughter Leah, the chief purser, the second purser, and the Commander himself.

The last-named was given the courtesy title of Commander and a resplendent uniform to go with it, but his duties were really those of liason-officer and entertainments man. He dealt with passengers' complaints and acted as chairman of, and general adviser to, the entertainments and

sports committees elected from among the passengers themselves, and was ordinarily the most urbane and sociable of men. On this occasion, however, he was looking so grim that there seemed no doubt that something, in the word of the steward, was most certainly *Up*.

"Ah, come in, Dame Beatrice," he said. "We are wondering whether you can help us to avoid a lot of unpleasantness and scandal. Mrs. Solomons' rubies seem to have been mislaid."

"Stolen!" sobbed Mrs. Solomons. "Why you are messink about usink wronk words, isn't it?" Her lapse into the accents of her Whitechapel youth, even without the venom in her voice and her sobbing utterance, was indicative of the depths of her feelings.

"And how can I help you?" Dame Beatrice enquired. The chief purser coughed modestly.

"I have told the Commander of your phenomenal successes with psychopaths and in solving cases involving crime," he said. "There seems to be no doubt that, as Mrs. Solomons states, her rubies have been purloined. What is all the more unfortunate for us, they were taken from my own office by someone who presented the receipt for them. She purported to be . . ."

"Wait a minute, Binns," put in the Commander. "It's not really your story. Do sit down, Dame Beatrice, you, too, Mrs. and Miss Solomons." He swung round on the youthful second purser. "Let Dame Beatrice hear all about it from *you*. Don't look so glum, man," he added, more kindly. "Nobody's blaming you for what happened. Naturally you honoured the receipt when it was presented. What else could you be expected to do?"

Thus encouraged, the second purser moistened his lips, waited until the women were seated, and then embarked upon his tale.

"I'm afraid there isn't much to tell," he began.

"Be bloody, bold, and resolute," suggested Dame Beatrice, thus adding her own note of encouragement for the benefit of the harassed young officer.

"Well, I was in charge of the office this evening while Mr. Binns and the third were off duty, when a girl in fancy dress came along. She fished out a receipt for a numbered package, signed the book, took the parcel, and went away. Of course I didn't dream she had no right . . ."

"Of course not," said Dame Beatrice. "At what time was this?"

"Six o'clock. I checked the time and wrote it down, as the regulations instruct."

"Did the girl say who she was?"

"No. She simply said, 'Can I have this out, please?' So I handed the package over."

"Would you recognise her again?"

"I hardly looked at her. In any case, she was pretty well disguised. She had on a black beard and a patch over one eye, and I think she was got up as some sort of a pirate."

"Strange and significant, since nobody wore fancy dress at dinner. The parade is scheduled for half-past nine this evening. That being so, I doubt whether there would be any point in asking you to attend the parade in order to identify the costume, since, if robbery was intended, the pirate costume will not appear in the parade, or will have been altered," said Dame Beatrice.

"Then what to do? All cabins must be searched immediately," cried Mrs. Solomons.

"That is the one thing we want to avoid if we can," said the Commander. "I assume that, if we can get back your property, you will be prepared to dispense with any further enquiry?"

"So I get my rubies I am satisfied."

"You say this girl signed the book?" said Dame Beatrice. "Have you this book with you?"



"Oh, yes, indeed, but I'm afraid it won't help," said the second purser wretchedly.

"Why not?"

"Well, as you see, Dame Beatrice . . ." he opened a large ledger . . . "the name she wrote is that of Miss Leah Solomons, and, of course, I didn't dream of questioning it."

"Because, until this evening, Miss Solomons was not known to you by sight?"

"Even if she had been," said the unfortunate young man, "I doubt whether I'd have recognised her in that beard and with the eye-shade, you know."

"It is not that you play a joke on me, Leah?" demanded her mother, sharply.

"Not my idea of a joke, Mummy, as you know perfectly well," said the composed and beautiful girl.

"No, no, of course not. Besides . . ." she peered at the open page of the ledger . . . "not your writing. Well, what for we should wait? I want my rubies and quick, isn't it?"

"We shall do our best, with Dame Beatrice's help, Mrs. Solomons," said the Commander. "But now, if you want your dinner, I think you had better get along to the dining-saloon."

"Come along, Mummy," said Leah. "We can't do any good by remaining here." She led her parent away. Binns, who had opened the door for them, closed it with a look of relief.

"Any hopes, Dame Beatrice?" asked the Commander, without much expectation of receiving a favourable reply.

"I have one hope, at present, but it may lead nowhere. Could you do without this ledger for a quarter of an hour or so? I should like to study this signature more closely."

"You think you might recognise the handwriting of this false Miss Solomons? Then you believe you know who she is?"

"It is a long shot, but worth trying. I believe I have a signature on my dinner menu which may guide me. A great

many of us signed one another's programmes this evening, so a pointer may be provided. One thing, I think, is certain. Whoever made this ridiculous attempt is an amateur. I suppose," she added, turning to the second purser, "you are certain that it was a woman?"

"Well, unless the chap was as clever as Danny la Rue, it certainly was a woman," he replied. "And if a man wanted to deceive me, would he have been made up as a pirate? Surely he would have chosen a woman's costume?"

"You certainly have a point there. One thing I find extremely puzzling. How did the thief obtain possession of Mrs. Solomons' receipt for the rubies?"

"Her daughter accepts responsibility for that. Mrs. Solomons got her to bring the necklace to the office, so, of course, I handed her the receipt. She says she meant to give it to her mother, but, in the excitement of going ashore, forgot to do so, and left it in her handbag."

"And then?"

"That is all we know."

"But she must have left her handbag lying about, if somebody was able to abstract the document from it."

"I know, and she admits she did put it down for a minute, but the fact doesn't help us. There are a thousand passengers on board. One thing: the fancy dress business lets out the crew and the stewards, and that's a blessing," said the Commander, "although, of course, a mixed one."

Dame Beatrice returned to her stateroom with the ledger. She already had a slight but definite idea of the identity of the thief. She had noted with what reluctance Mary Cowie had consented to sign other people's programmes at dinner. After spending some time in making a close comparison of the signatures on her programme with the forged signature in the ledger, she wrote a note and rang for the steward.

"I want this taken to Miss Mary Cowie," she said, "I do not know the number of the cabin, but it is on the port side

on C deck.”

“It was only a joke,” said Mary Cowie, feebly. “I found the handbag on a deck-chair near the outdoor pool, but, of course, as the pool was drained and everybody was changing to go ashore, there was nobody about. All I did was to open the bag to see who the owner was, so that I could return it . . .”

“It didn’t occur to you to hand the receptacle over to the deck steward and allow *him* to find the owner? That, it seems to me, would have been a more sensible procedure.”

“He wasn’t there. Anyway, I found that the bag belonged to Leah Solomons and then I—well, I found the receipt. I knew what it was for, because Mrs. Solomons had broadcast it all over the ship that her stones were safely locked away in the purser’s office, so I thought—just for a joke—I’d go and claim them, and—and it came off. Is she—do you think she’s going to turn nasty?”

“What did you do with the handbag?”

“I left it just where I’d found it, but I kept an eye on it, to make sure nobody made off with it, you know, and in less than five minutes Leah herself came along and picked it up.”

“Well, now that you’ve had your joke, you had better return the rubies, had you not?” Dame Beatrice turned a bland, enquiring countenance to the white-faced girl.

“All right. I’ll go and put them in the Solomons’ cabin while they’re having second dinner,” said Mary, most reluctantly.

“I think not. Some person less innocent than yourself might decide to visit the cabin while the owners are absent. I think you should return the necklace in person.”

“Oh, I can’t! I couldn’t! She might think—she might accuse me . . .”

“Well, she would be quite right, wouldn’t she?” said Dame Beatrice, with ruthless accuracy. “Very well. You may hand the rubies over to me. In the ensuing transaction you shall remain anonymous—*this* time.” To herself she said, as she returned to her stateroom after handing back the rubies to the chief purser, “Well, I have made an enemy of poor little Cowie.”

A number of passengers of both sexes had chosen to dress up as pirates for the fancy dress parade, but Mary, who was one of them, wore neither beard nor eye-patch, and there was little chance that anybody would connect her with the rubies. She was not a prize-winner, but Roger’s Neptune costume came in for some acclamation although, to his chagrin, his prize was listed as the one given to the youngest competitor.

Chloe Cowie had elected to represent the goddess Artemis. Looking at her large limbs, deep bosom, and also at the bow and arrows she carried, Dame Beatrice’s memory went back to the strange expedition which, many years before, had been led by Sir Rudri Hopkinson. Chloe strikingly resembled his daughter Megan, and Megan, with a long-bow, had committed what might be called a judicial murder. Dick had been in love with Megan at the time and, with foolish chivalry, had confessed to the matter before Dame Beatrice confronted Megan with the truth.

The situation was intriguing, as Chloe was related to the Hopkinsons. It would account for Dick’s being so much attracted to her, especially as she so closely resembled the woman whom, at one time, he had so much wanted to marry. Dame Beatrice found herself wondering whether he had kept in touch with Megan. Her mother, according to him, was living in Switzerland and her brothers were in America. Where Megan herself was domiciled had not been disclosed, and Dame Beatrice wondered whether this omission had been made deliberately and whether Dick was secretly still in touch with Megan.

## CHAPTER TWO

### **Terpsichore, the Muse of Dance and Song**

“Whereon innumerable strangers resorted from far countries, adventuring themselves by long journeys on land, and by great perils on water . . .”

At Naples there was a choice of shore excursions. Dame Beatrice had opted for Pompeii, with lunch at Amalfi and a drive back along the magnificent coast road between Amalfi and Sorrento. Mary, who had longed to visit the Isle of Capri, found herself swept off by her aunt to Solfatara and Pozzuoli. Roger, who had set his heart on making the ascent of Vesuvius, was booked for the Pompeii excursion and was inclined to be critical and disgruntled in consequence.

Dame Beatrice, who had been following the affair between Julian and Hero with a sympathetic but ironic eye, was not in the least surprised when, as soon as the ship's party had left the motorcoach (which had brought them at speed along the Autostrada Napoli-Pompei) and had walked through the tunnel at the Porta Marina, the amorous couple contrived to give the rest of the party the slip, leaving her in charge of the boy.

She was more amused than displeased by this, since Roger, with her, had long since abandoned his natural

defensiveness, but she realised that, so far, one of the Apollo pilgrims had been proved guilty of misappropriation and another could be accused of dereliction of duty. The temptation, in both cases, she thought, must have been severe. Mary must surely long to escape from her aunt's domination and achieve financial independence, no matter by what doubtful means, and as for Julian, he had perceived the necessity for making hay while the sun shone, since, in a few days' time, his rival Simonides, with better looks and far more money, would reappear on the scene and compete with him for Hero's favours. Julian, Dame Beatrice thought, would have been more than human if he had ignored the chances which Fate might toss in his way before the ship docked at Piraeus.

She was soon bored with the Forum, with its triumphal arch of Germanicus and its skeletal remains of the basilica and she also paid scant attention to the temple of Venus, badly damaged by the earthquake of A.D. 62 and not fully repaired by the time of the eruption of 79. At the temple of Apollo, on the other side of the road, she paused, reflected, and then, with a profound genuflection, laid at the feet of a splendid statue of the god the bouquet of flowers which an itinerant vendor in Naples had persuaded her to purchase and which she had longed to dispense with ever since.

"I say," said Roger, interested in this votive offering, "you don't really believe—I mean, you're not superstitious or anything, are you?"

"I think not; nevertheless, in view of the nature of our pilgrimage, I feel that nothing is lost by placating those powers of which we know nothing, but which took their authority, in times past, from the fervour of their worshippers. In other words, I am tired of carrying the bouquet, and this seems a suitable spot at which to discard it," said Dame Beatrice.

They followed the guide and the rest of the party, and were shown frescoes and baths, houses and shops, the

theatre, the great Palaestra, and the amphitheatre, and also the stepping stones across the street where the Via di Stabiae meets the Via dell'Abbondanza. Above and beyond all this was the ever-present, looming, incalculable mountain with, literally, its pillar of fire by night. Roger kept eyeing it wistfully. He was obviously bored by what he had seen of Pompeii.

"The rich people's houses are very fine, and all that," he said at last, "but aren't there the other sort? You know, with rude pictures on the walls and little cubicles?"

"There are at least two of the type you mention. One is the Tavorna Lusoria, to which the more prosperous citizens resorted and where their owings can still be seen chalked up," Dame Beatrice replied. "It combined the attractions of public house, gambling den, and place of assignation, as you suggest. Then there is the less discreet and possibly less expensive Lupanare, in which the obscene frescoes to which you refer are to be found on the walls of the ground-floor passage."

"Have you seen them?"

"Yes, years ago. They are unremarkable and are difficult to decipher. I fear they would neither add to your knowledge nor captivate your imagination."

"I don't suppose they'd let me see them, anyway. It's rotten being only fourteen. What do you think Suffolk is up to? Does he want to marry Hero? They're always about together. I've slept on deck twice, just to oblige them, but I don't know what Mr. Dick would say if he knew."

"Dear me! I trust they were duly grateful to you for your co-operation."

"I think Suffolk's an ass. How does he know I won't tell my father? Not that I shall, of course. There are better ways of going about things. It gives me a hold over Suffolk, though I don't suppose I shall use it—put any pressure on him, you know—but it's as well to have power, isn't it? I like to feel I'm top dog, especially over him."

Dame Beatrice mentally added a potential blackmailer to her list and found the addition stimulating. The criminal classes, she reflected, were going to be well represented on the Apollo pilgrimage.

At dinner that night there were only Dame Beatrice, Roger, Chloe Cowie, and Mary at table. The two people who made up the number necessary to complete the muster seemed to have decided to remain ashore, and Julian and Hero, having returned to the ship with the rest of the motorcoach party, had changed into evening clothes and gone off to sample the pleasures of Neapolitan night-life ashore.

Mary, warily suspicious of Dame Beatrice since the episode of Mrs. Solomons' rubies, seemed tired. Her aunt, on the other hand, was wearisomely loquacious on the subject of Solfatara and its bubbling-mud sulphuric wonders. Roger, who disliked both women, launched into a description of the friezes in the House of the Mysteries at Pompeii and contrived to invest these with a pornographic quality which was quite uncalled for. This imaginative exercise fascinated Dame Beatrice and outraged Chloe Cowie.

"How *could* you have taken him to such a place?" she demanded, when Mary had gone to bed and Roger had left them in order to attend a film show, the only form of ship's entertainment offered for that evening.

"It was not I, but the guide," Dame Beatrice mildly explained, "and the frescoes are particularly fine. In short, I am afraid that the naughty child—who, no doubt, is tired and therefore mischievous, for the day has been unusually hot for the time of year—was compensating himself for failing to observe some graffiti which, of course, I did *not* take him to see. It is interesting, though, is it not, that the Roman ceremonies of initiation into the cult of the Mysteries (based, one supposes, on those of Eleusis) resembled so strongly the initiation of present-day witches to a coven?"



“I know nothing of either,” said Chloe shortly, “and I find the subject distasteful.”

The ship left Naples at six in the morning and made her leisurely way to Palermo, where she was to stay for thirty hours. There was only one shore excursion advertised, and Dame Beatrice had not booked it. During the gentle sag southward to Sicily, deck competitions were played off, the outdoor pool was popular, and after a typical day at sea the ship docked at just after four. As no shore excursion was scheduled until the following morning, most of the passengers stayed on board for tea, but early in the evening many of them went ashore. Among these were Julian with, this time, Mary. He had been at her side all day, while Hero sulked in a deck-chair and did not appear either at breakfast or lunch.

Roger, who had made friends with some of the crew, had often climbed up inside the slightly canted mast by way of an iron ladder and emerged at the crow's nest, a vantage point from which he could survey much of the seascape and chat with the sailor on duty. There was nobody up there while the ship was in port. Dame Beatrice refused to join him and Hero found her seated in the almost deserted lounge.

“Tomorrow,” she said, “Julian takes charge of Roger, I hope. It is not right he leaves you to look after him at Naples.”

“He had an excuse, no doubt,” said Dame Beatrice, leering kindly at her. “Did you and he have a pleasant day?”

“Ah, you are joking with me, and I do not care for jokes. Do you go ashore tomorrow? I know you have not booked the excursion.”

“And you? What are your own plans?” She guessed that Hero and Julian must have quarrelled.

"I shall join the others. It may be an embarrassment to Julian to have me with him as well as that stupid, sheep's-eyed Mary, and I understand that we go five people in each car. We shall be a merry company." She laughed sardonically.

"I sincerely hope so, and I agree that Julian should make himself responsible for Roger. It is quite right of you to suggest it," said Dame Beatrice. Hero stood up.

"Oh," she said, "I see that here comes the mutton-lamb aunt, so I will leave you. She will talk about her books."

Chloe Cowie bore down upon Dame Beatrice as Hero left by another doorway, and seated herself amply on a settee.

"You know," she said, "I really do feel I owe you an apology. I'm sure you're going to be sweet enough to accept it."

"With pleasure," Dame Beatrice replied, "except that I have not the least idea what you mean."

"Oh, my dear, how forgiving you are! I've been talking to the first officer—such a very nice man—and I'm afraid I'd got hold of the wrong end of the stick about those wonderful, idealistic frescoes in the Villa of the Mysteries. I had no right, simply *no right at all*, to speak to you about them as I did. It is only that I do so dread to think of innocent young minds being corrupted that I did not stop to choose my words."

"If you think Roger's mind could be corrupted by *any* frescoes, let alone those in the Villa of the Mysteries, you cannot know very much about the mentality of a boy of fourteen," said Dame Beatrice, with a crocodile leer.

"Oh, I realise that, really I do. Boys of that age are precocious little monsters! Well, may you and I be friends? Do say we may! Please do!"

"I am not able to commit myself so far. I do not make friends, only acquaintances and enemies."

"Now, now! I'm quite sure that isn't true. Are you enjoying the cruise?"

"Yes, on the whole. I like being on the sea and the meals are excellent."

"What do you think of the other people on board?"

"I have not had very much to do with them. They seem pleasant enough."

"Rather a lot of *Jews*, don't you think?"

"They make livelier company than some of us do, perhaps."

"Fancy that ridiculous woman making all that fuss over her rubies! It seems that they were not stolen after all. I daresay they are nothing but paste, anyway, were the truth but known. These people buy the right things, have them copied, and then sell the originals to make a hush-hush, no tax profit, passing off the copies as the real thing just for the snobbery value, you know, and, of course, to cheat the law."

"Really? That is most interesting."

"If you find it so, you would like my *He Passed By Her Window*. I explore the subject there in some depth. In the story, Sir Galienne le Touquet . . ."

"What a very charming name! I once knew a man named—that is, he called himself—Sir Rudri van Eek Lothair Hopkinson."

"Really? What a fascinating name. Well, this man in my book . . ." said Chloe hastily.

"I mention Sir Rudri because, for some reason, the sight of you brings him to my mind."

"What an extraordinary thing!"

"I went with him and his party to Greece once."

"Ah, 'the isles of Greece, the isles of Greece, where burning Sappho loved and sung.'"

"Those lines have always troubled me a little. Should it not have been 'sang'?"

"Oh, you don't allow for poet's licence! In my novel *Weary Gleaner* I allow a young poet to use the most

*extravagant* language with no grammar at all about it. It was my method of showing that he really *is* a poet, you see—that is to say, wildly, passionately independent of all our outworn shibboleths. Oh, there are tricks in my trade as much as in any other, only, of course, they are not tricks so much as pure technique.”

“It must be very difficult to depict any artist,” said Dame Beatrice, “particularly an artist in the use of words. It has always seemed to me that for a non-artist to attempt to describe the work of an artist is simply man making God in his own image, don’t you think? The long beard and the Victorian father persist, whatever even the most enlightened theologians can say.”

“But we are told that God *is* our Father,” protested Chloe, diverted, for the moment, from the subject of her books.

“Alas, yes! A comforting but strange philosophy, and akin to the instruction that we should cast our cares upon the Lord and, in another context, wait patiently for him.”

“Are you an atheist, Dame Beatrice?”

“I don’t care to label myself. And now, if I may turn your earlier question back on yourself, are *you* enjoying the cruise?”

“Only so-so, I am afraid. Unless one plays deck games, or swims, or knits . . .” she looked disparagingly at a nondescript length of knitting with which Dame Beatrice had been affecting to occupy herself . . . “there seems so little to do.”

“There are the bridge parties,” Dame Beatrice suggested.

“Oh, my *dear*! Have you *seen* the people who play? I have a long passage about them in my *Mighty Fallen*. It is positively scathing!”

“So long as it is not scurrilous! Reverting to Lord Byron, if he had written ‘sang’ he would have been obliged to rhyme it with ‘sprang’ and I really do think that ‘sprang’ is

one of the ugliest words in our language. Bang. Fang. Gang. Hang. Pang. Rang. Sprang. Sang. Tang—I dislike the sound of them all. However, although ‘bang’ and ‘gang’ are still operative, I suppose ‘hang’ now only applies to such matters as Academy pictures and butchers’ meat. Perhaps that is just as well, if one deplores judicial murder.”

“‘Tang’ is a good word,” protested Chloe. “I often use it in my novels; ‘pang’ too. I consider both of them to be extremely poetic words. As a matter of fact—”

“And how is your niece enjoying the cruise?” asked Dame Beatrice, who was determined to avoid having the nice points of Chloe’s style and vocabulary rehearsed to her. “I am glad to see that she appears to have made a friend of young Mr. Suffolk, the boys’ tutor. He seems quite an estimable young man.”

“Yes, possibly, but I don’t encourage Mary to have friendships with young men. It would be a very great nuisance to me if she wanted to marry. I depend on her for all sorts of things connected with my work—only minor matters, of course, but anything which affects my inspiration is a serious disadvantage. After all, I write for posterity.”

“Mary may feel that she would like to found a dynasty for posterity, you know, and she may think that she ought to be married before she embarks upon so serious a project.”

“If that is meant as a joke I consider it not in the best of taste. In any case, I do not approve of early marriages. As for Mr. Suffolk, he seems to be without prospects and Mary has nothing at all except what I shall leave her, and the day for that is a long way off, I trust. She would be very foolish to marry and so destroy her chances of a fortune. Besides, Mary needs the guidance of a mature and experienced person and, to my mind, Mr. Suffolk is vapid and frivolous. I only hope that he will be prepared to shoulder his responsibilities tomorrow. I was told of the calm way he

jettisoned them on the last shore excursion. I fear you were the sufferer."

"Yes," agreed Dame Beatrice. "I think he will have to take charge of young Roger tomorrow, since I myself shall not be taking the scheduled trip."

"You are going to spend a quiet day on board? I don't blame you. I shall go with the party, of course, to take charge of Mary, but I do not intend to be landed with that boy Roger. After all, I have my own responsibilities. I do not care for young Suffolk's suddenly taking up with Mary. There's something behind it."

"I should have thought that Miss Cowie was old enough to take care of herself."

"Old enough, yes, but she has lived an extremely sheltered life and, apart from young Suffolk, I do not trust Italians. This is Mary's first experience of foreign travel. Her parents died, one after the other, about two years ago, and I was forced to take her on, but I was obliged to leave her at home last year while I lectured in America, so she has really seen nothing of the world and was brought up in a village. She has no resources at all, poor child."

"Really? I thought she sang very well at the concert last night."

"I suppose she is used to performing in the village hall."

"What did you think of the others in our party?"

"Oh, that ventriloquist nonsense! Still, I suppose an entertainment, of however amateur a nature (as this certainly was), makes a change for the passengers. Not all of us want dancing and film shows every evening. Not that I thought the concert was worth attending. Still, a public figure like myself must show an interest." To Dame Beatrice's relief, on this exit line she took her departure.

The concert had been the brainwave (in his own and his wife's estimation) of the Percival Dearwater whom Dame

Beatrice had met at tea when the ship was still berthed at Southampton Docks. He, it seemed, was an amateur conjuror and, according to Mrs. Dearwater, was “on the fringe of the Magic Circle.” Apparently his first concern, at the beginning of the cruise, had been to scout for talent among the passengers and then, when he felt that he had received a sufficient number of promises, he had talked the Commander into sponsoring the concert programme.

He himself had made two appearances, the first as a solo performer as conjuror, using mostly handkerchiefs and playing cards, the second in company with volunteers from the audience. He had chosen Hero (which, in view of her striking good looks, was not surprising) and Roger, as the youngest passenger—or so he explained. Each of them was provided with a puppet. Hero’s was a rabbit, Roger’s a baby doll, while Dearwater himself used a toy duck. All had come from the ship’s shop and were recognised by the audience with applause.

After some patter containing a few well-worn jokes, Dearwater announced a grand triple ventriloquist act in which all the performers and their dummies would speak in turn. Dame Beatrice, who had not thought that she would derive much enjoyment from the entertainment, had secured a chair at the back, intending to slip away when she felt she had had enough, and she had been about to leave when Roger and Hero were called up on to the stage.

The act which followed was either under-rehearsed or very carefully rehearsed indeed, for the dummies and their owners spoke out of turn and interrupted one another so much and so often that the audience began to applaud, mostly with ironic intent. In the end, their good nature won them over, however, and the whole performance was voted a great success.

Hero always took breakfast in her cabin. Mrs. Cowie and Mary were early-morning breakfasters so that Mrs. Cowie could get in her daily promenade before the deck for this

purpose was over-populated. Julian was always last at table, so Dame Beatrice and Roger were usually the only ones of the party to be together at the first meal of the day.

"Well," he said, on the morning following the concert, "what did you think of our bit of spoofery last night?"

"I thought it most amusing."

"Yes, we got lots of clapping, didn't we? Did you spot the one of us who was feeding the dummies?"

"No, but I was at the back of the lounge, away out of range."

"I don't think that made any difference. Heaps of people afterwards asked us which was the ventriloquist, so, of course, we told them it was all of us, that we could all do it. Rather a good jape, don't you think?"

"And should I obtain the same answer if I asked the same question?"

"Well, we rather promised old Percy, you know, that we wouldn't let on."

"Mr. Dearwater?"

"Oh, it's all right. He asked me to call him Percy."

Following her conversation with Dame Beatrice, Chloe took it upon herself to waylay Julian and ask him point-blank whether he was prepared to take charge of Roger on the Sicilian excursion.

"Yes. Oh, yes, of course," Julian assured her, eyeing her with extreme dislike, "although I don't know why you're interested."

"I feel that the boy should not miss the opportunity of visiting Palermo," explained Chloe earnestly. "Cruising ships usually call at Messina, so this may be the only opportunity for him to see the cathedral at Monreale and, should time permit, the unfinished but majestic Doric temple at Segesta."

"You seem so well informed, Mrs. Cowie, that perhaps you yourself would like to show Roger around," said Julian.



"Young man, you will no doubt be required to give an account of your stewardship when you meet Roger's father in Athens, and I might as well tell you that I shall be perfectly able and willing to render my *own* account of it as well."

"That," said Julian, drawling out his words as usual, "sounds to me remarkably like a threat, Mrs. Cowie. If you mean to imply that by abandoning Roger I shall leave myself free to squire Mary, you are making the mistake of a life-time." He swung round on an impenitent heel and went off to find Dame Beatrice. "Look," he said, "I'm sorry I dodged the column at Pompeii. I do hope you'll forgive me for landing you with Roger. Are you taking the excursion this morning?"

"No," Dame Beatrice replied. She cackled harshly, startling him. "As you are good enough to acknowledge, I did my bear-leading at Pompeii."

"Don't rub it in," said Julian, with his twisted, attractive smile. "I've admitted *mea culpa*." He saluted her and walked off, but was pounced upon again by Chloe, who collared him at the top of the companionway.

"I ought to add," she said, "that I consider Dame Beatrice extremely frivolous. A woman of her age should know better than to allow Roger to look at rude, Pompeian frescoes and, what is more, explain them to him."

"Did she do that?" asked Julian, laughing heartily. "Good for her! I bet the lad had the time of his young life."

"She is a hedonist, an atheist, and a corrupter of the young," said Chloe heatedly. "I neither like nor trust her."

"Perhaps your feelings are reciprocated," said Julian, "although, personally, I shouldn't think she'd be bothered. I suppose you also looked at the frescoes aforesaid?—or were you too delicately-minded to penetrate the Hall of the Mysteries? That's what you're talking about, isn't it? I suppose you mean that flagellation scene. Personally, I've always held that to the pure most things are impure, but, of

course, I may be wrong. Oh, but you didn't risk Pompeii, did you?"

"You seem to forget that you are a paid employee," said Chloe, in a loud and furious voice.

"But I *don't* forget that Mary is an unpaid serf," retorted Julian. "Why don't you give the girl a decent allowance and her freedom?"

"Mind your own business, young man!"

"And you mind yours," said Julian, under his breath. A little later, watching their departure from her vantage point on the promenade deck, Dame Beatrice had the felicity of seeing him, Chloe, Roger, Hero, and Mary all being loaded by the tours supervisor into one large car. She wondered how many of them would enjoy their trip. Just as she was toying with this thought, Hero stepped out of the car and began a return journey to the ship. She joined Dame Beatrice and together they watched the cavalcade of cars move away from the quay.

"You have changed your mind about the excursion?" asked Dame Beatrice.

"Yes. Julian sits beside Mary. I leave them together."

"Oh, dear! Have you quarrelled with Julian? I perceived that he was in belligerent mood. He has just been having a passage-of-arms with Mrs. Cowie."

"I do not quarrel. It is not in my nature. I am bored with his society, that is all. On shore in Naples do we have fun? No. It is so respectable. We go to a good restaurant, very select, have dinner, dance. Drink a little—but very little, because Julian does not like to spend his money . . ."

"I don't think, you know, that he has very much money to spend."

"And then makes himself very sulky and boorish because a handsome Italian officer picks me up and dances very often with me, and escorts me back to the ship."

"Dear me! You mean you deserted poor Julian? Well, well!"

"Of course not. Julian trails along behind us, not speaking, and I have no more fun with my Italian officer; so now, today, I leave Julian to Mary. Much joy to both of them! From Athens I think I do not take the tour. Who wants to visit more temples? Who wants to see more ruins? I think I raise a rebellion and keep Simon with me in Athens. There is fun to be had with Simon, more than with that jealous, stupid Julian."

"Would you upset all Mr. Dick's arrangements?"

"Oh, no! Poor Papa Ronald! He is like a little boy with his Apollo temple playthings. Did Julian speak rudely to that Mrs. Cowie? Then I think I forgive him, but not yet, perhaps, otherwise he may like to think he has command over me, and that would be a disaster," said Hero, smiling again.

Before the ship reached Piraeus there was a further port of call. This was Iraklion in Crete, and the excursion was to Knossos, to see the vast area covered by the excavated Palace of Minos.

Most of the party returned to the ship not very much wiser than when they had left it. Of Dame Beatrice's group, she (who had taken the trouble to read up the subject before she left England) had gained the most from her visit, but it was Roger who seemed, in one sense, to have had the most remarkable time.

The tour of the palace had been exhausting, for the day was extremely warm and the area covered had been considerable, so that only the younger and hardier passengers spent the evening on the dance floor, and Dame Beatrice was not surprised to find that, of her party, except for herself (who minded heat no more than a lizard would), only Julian and Mary had elected to remain up for very long after dinner. She sat in the largest lounge with a book from the well-stocked ship's library and was joined by the other two at intervals when they decided to sit out a dance. The

fact that they came into the lounge instead of occupying adjacent deck-chairs on the discreetly darkened promenade deck indicated that, from Julian's point of view, the affair was making no progress, and Dame Beatrice inferred from this that, as soon as Hero was prepared to take him on again, Mary would be out of the picture.

All next day, as the ship set course northwards for Piraeus, she noticed that the boy Roger seemed pre-occupied and was even more silent than usual. She put this down to the fact that he had been knocked out in the semi-finals of the deck-tennis competition and so was without gainful occupation. He spent some of his time swimming and his appetite at meal times seemed unimpaired, but apart from this she concluded that he must be bored, for he displayed a disposition to avail himself of her society, although, even then, he was uncommunicative and appeared to be brooding darkly.

It was not until the evening that she was made aware of the reason for his silence, which he broke in a somewhat startling manner. He followed her to the rail of the promenade deck and said, after they had stood there for a minute or two,

"Could I speak to you in absolute private, do you think?"

"There's my cabin," she said, "but if it's only that you want some money to spend at the ship's shop, I'll be pleased to give it you."

"Oh, no, nothing like that. Perhaps if we go to the glassed-in bit at the forward end of this deck and pretend we're just looking towards the way the ship is heading—lots of people do that, so it wouldn't look suspicious . . ."

"Let us go there, then. Will you lead the way?" She wondered what kind of disclosure was about to be made. It could be almost anything from an attempt at arson to a secret love affair. A boy of Roger's age was capable of either, and a myriad other mistakes, crimes, or peccadilloes, she reflected. He led the way and they stood in a kind of

cross-corridor, glass-fronted to protect it from the wind. It enclosed a space between the forward end of the promenade deck and the forward bulkhead of the lounge. Apart from themselves, it was occupied only by a closely-linked couple at the far end who were whispering and laughing together, and were otherwise oblivious of life, the world, and time.

"It's like this," said Roger. "What would you do if you heard two people planning a murder?"

"What I would do might depend upon whether or not I hoped their enterprise might thrive."

"That was Pompilius Lena in *Julius Caesar*, wasn't it? But, honestly, I'm not joking. I've been thinking it over all last evening, and when I went to bed, and all of today, and I can't make up my mind. You see, I might be quite wrong and, if I am, it wouldn't do to take steps, would it?"

"What do you think you heard?"

"Well, there's no *think* about it. I know jolly well what I heard. Anyway, although I don't want to grass on anybody, I'd like your advice about what I ought to do. I mean, murder isn't quite like anything else, is it? And I thought, as you've had a lot to do with it—solving it, I mean, and doing detection, and knowing all about people's minds, and all that—you'd be the best person to come to for advice."

"Have you told nobody else about this?"

"No. I did think, for a bit, that I might tell Suffolk, but he seems to be a bit involved and, anyway, he's rather an ass, so I didn't."

"By 'involved' I trust you do not mean that he . . ."

"Oh, no! Of course not! I mean, he may be an ass, but he's—well, he's quite all right. Anyway, these were women."

"Dear me!"

"And they may not have meant what I thought they meant."

"I will bear that strongly in mind."

"Yes. Well, I expect you remember Crete and the shore excursion?—the Palace of Minos and all that?"

"Vividly."

"The way we walked to the gatekeeper's lodge where we met the guide who was going to show us round?"

"Yes, indeed. I also remember the cypress trees and my first sight of the palace."

"Yes, well, then we went into a sort of hall where there was that picture of the cup-bearer which the guide said was a copy, because the real one was in a museum somewhere."

"Yes. I thought the copy was a remarkably fine one. It is by Gillieron, and the original is in the Herakleion Museum. I should like to see it, wouldn't you?"

"No point in bothering if the copy is just exactly like it, and I suppose it is. From there we went into the gallery, as the guide called it, and then we all pushed along a corridor. I expect you remember it because, opening off it, there were all those storerooms with the terrific jars, some of them taller than me. Well, that's where I began to get a funny feeling."

"Claustrophobia?"

"Oh, no, I don't think so. I mean, I've often crawled through drainpipes in builders' yards when I was a kid, and explored under culverts and all that kind of thing. No, it was more the sort of feeling you get when people say it's because someone is walking over your grave. Once, for a dare, I spent a night by myself in a haunted house, when Dad had gone off on one of his botany jaunts and Edmund was playing in the Sevens. I wasn't really scared, of course, but this was the same kind of feeling, so I slunk off and went down some steps and came to another corridor and this led to another large hall with a row of pillars down the middle. I don't know whether you remember it?"

"The Hall of the Double Axes, no doubt."

"Anyway, whatever it was, just as I went into it I heard voices, so I crouched down behind a sort of a wall by some

steps, because I thought I might be going to be caught up with another party being taken round and, apart from the creepiness, I was just plain bored with the guide's talk. Well, I recognised the voices, so I stayed where I was, because, of all people, I didn't want to have to hook on to Hero Metoulides and Mary Cowie, and that's who it was."

"How interesting. But what had Hero and Mary to say to one another? They do not usually appear to relish each other's society overmuch."

"I'm beginning to believe that's a blind. Women are pretty dishonourable, don't you think?"

"You can scarcely expect me to reply to that question in the affirmative, but, all the same, it interests me, particularly coming from one who, by his own admission, is an eavesdropper."

"Well, I wouldn't like you to think I usually listen when people are talking about things they wouldn't want other people to hear," said Roger, in a tone of self-justification, "but I was anxious they shouldn't see me, so I stayed put rather than make a row creeping away. They were standing behind a big square pillar which was put there to help shore up the roof or something, and I was really pretty close to them. I didn't want to embarrass them, you see."

"Close enough, you mean, to hear their conversation?"

"Yes. I simply couldn't *help* hearing it. Mary said: 'You see, the only reason I put up with her is because I'm her only near relation, but, if she marries, bang go my chances.' Then Hero said: 'Our interests are similar, so far as I can see, because, if they get married, Mr. Dick and her, they may have children. As things stand, Simon may be all right . . . ' And Mary said: 'If he's legally adopted, but is he?' So Hero said she thought he was, but there might not be anything in writing, because Simon was the son of an archaeologist who had been friendly with Mr. Dick, and it might only have been an understanding that when the father died Mr. Dick should look after Simon."

“Very interesting indeed. And what did you make of all this?”

“Well, I thought it sounded pretty fishy. You see, that wasn’t all I heard.”

“Oh, really?”

“No. Mary said: ‘Whichever one of them she chooses, either Dick or Owen, it will cut me out, even if they don’t have children, so I’ve got to do something pretty drastic.’ And Hero said: ‘If she marries Mr. Owen I couldn’t care less whether they have children or not. It wouldn’t affect either Simon or me. But if she chooses Mr. Dick and *they* have children, it might make my position very delicate. I don’t think Dick would leave me unprovided for—he is a good, kind man and very rich from the property somebody must have left him—but all would be changed if he married, and I dislike changes. Besides, I do not want her for a stepmother.’ Well, doesn’t it all sound to you pretty sinister? As things are, Hero gets her own way with Mr. Dick all the time, but I should think Mrs. Cowie could put a stop to that.”

“That,” said Dame Beatrice, “is very true, but do you not think you are reading too much into this conversation you say you overheard?”

“I hope I am, but I haven’t finished telling you yet. Mary said: ‘Well, drowning won’t do.’ And Hero said: ‘Oh, no, not that! Nothing can be done until we are in Greece. With luck, I think I know the very place, but we must wait and see. Maybe there will be no wedding at all, and in that case we need not trouble. Besides, I don’t think you will have the stomach for it when it comes to the point.’ Mary said perhaps she wouldn’t, and that she would never have thought of such a thing if Hero hadn’t put the idea into her head. At that, Hero laughed and, before they could say any more, the rest of our party came along and we all teamed up and Hero detached Suffolk from the others and took no more notice of Mary. So what do you think I ought to do?”



"Well, if you have reported the conversation correctly, we know that there is no need for you to do anything at present. After that, you can exercise vigilance, I suppose, if you think there is any point in doing so."

"You don't think I ought to tell them I overheard what they were saying?"

"Would you put your head in a noose, as the saying is?"

"I hadn't thought of that! You mean, if they meant what I think they meant, they'd stick at nothing to gain their ends, including murdering *me*?"

"Villainy knows no law and Mary, in particular, has much at stake, it seems. She would have more to lose than Hero would, whether Mrs. Cowie married Mr. Dick or Mr. Owen."

"Do I just sit tight, then?"

"It seems to amount to that."

"All the same, I wish you'd tip Mrs. Cowie the wink. I mean, / can't, because she simply wouldn't believe me. She'd think I was pulling her leg."

"No doubt she would," said Dame Beatrice, leering at the boy. "Yes, I'm sure she would—unless, of course, she disinherited Mary on the spot, and you wouldn't want *that* to happen, would you?"

"Oh, well, no, I suppose not." He turned abruptly away, but Dame Beatrice caught him by the sleeve.

"I forbid you," she said, "to try this unlikely and mischievous story on anyone else."

"Oh, all right, then," said Roger ungraciously.

"Let me have it plainly stated."

"I promise I won't repeat the story to anyone else. But it's all quite true, you know. I'm not just making a song and dance about nothing."

"Truth, they say, lives in a well, and, to my mind, the water sometimes has a very ancient and fish-like odour."

"That's from *The Tempest*—Trinculo talking about Caliban."

“I see that Mr. Suffolk has not neglected your education, and now I am prepared to continue it. I do not believe your story for various reasons which I will now proceed to give you. First, Hero never refers to her guardian as Dick, or Mr. Dick, but always as Papa Ronald. Second, Hero and Mary are, and have been from the first, utterly inimicable to one another and would never under any circumstances have held this extremely unlikely conversation. Third, you have your own axe to grind in the matter and I only hope that you have not been attempting to prove an alibi before the event. You do not want Mrs. Cowie as a stepmother, do you?—but even that would be preferential to a long stay in Borstal. And now be off with you, and think on these things. Remember that in all criminal enterprises attention to detail is essential if the enterprise is to succeed.”

## CHAPTER THREE

### **Erato, the Muse of Erotic Poetry and Mime**

“ . . . and when we were set down and placed in order, we began to talk, to laugh and be merry. Byrrhena spoke to me, and said, ‘I pray you, cousin, how like you our country? Verily I think there is no other city which has the like temples, baths and other commodities as we have here.’ ”

For all her dismissal of it as a boyish and slightly macabre essay in indicating his dislike of Mrs. Cowie, Dame Beatrice gave some thought to Roger’s story. That it was a fabrication she had no doubt whatever, but the interesting point about it was the way it hung together. It could so easily have been true that again she went over in her mind those indications which assured her that it was not. For one thing, as she had pointed out, there was no likelihood, in the present stage of their relations, that Hero and Mary would become allies and fellow-conspirators. The venue which Roger had chosen for his imaginary overhearing of an imaginary conversation was equally unlikely. If the two girls ever reached a stage where they wished to be in collusion, they would surely meet in the small single cabin which Hero occupied, and certainly not in a public place which was

liable to be invaded at any moment by conducted parties of sightseers.

Then—a telling issue, this—the interests of the two girls were by no means identical, as Roger himself had realised. Mary might have a very powerful motive for wishing to rid herself of her domineering aunt if she could not prevent a re-marriage, for most probably she knew that, up to the present, she was that aunt's heiress. She must therefore be aware that Mrs. Cowie's re-marriage would almost certainly jeopardise her claim, especially as the aunt was still young enough to have children.

Hero had no such powerful reason for wishing Mrs. Cowie out of the way. For one thing, far from being dominated by her, she invariably treated the older woman with an infuriating blend of amusement and courtesy, giving the impression that she considered her a kind of harmless freak. As for money, even if Ronald Dick married, Hero would be amply provided for, as Dame Beatrice knew. Dick, over lunch that first time at her house, had told her about his two changelings and that their prospects would remain the same in the event of his marriage or his death.

The problem, as she saw it, was exactly what to make of Roger and his lying report. It amused her to think that, in giving it to her, he had been "trying it on the dog" and this in a most intelligent way, since it meant that he had summed her up sufficiently well to realise that, if the fabrication passed muster with her, he could be justified in assuming that others might swallow it.

She wondered what kind of life he led with a father who went off on botanical expeditions, a brother who played Rugby football (often on tour), and a tutor who was prepared to abandon his duty if an attractive girl was the lure.

Such a boy must lead a solitary existence at times, and might be tempted to dramatise himself. Should Mrs. Cowie (so he might argue with wishful thinking) meet with a fatal

accident, how satisfying to appear in the witness-box for the prosecution and denounce Hero and Mary, both of whom, Dame Beatrice had noticed, regarded and treated him as an encumbrance on the party and a bit of a nuisance into the bargain.

The problem, therefore, was Roger himself. That he possessed a criminal streak she did not doubt. That was common to many boys of his age. Whether he meant real mischief, and that to the detested Mrs. Cowie, she did not know, but she found the fabricated story disquieting largely *because* she did not know. She trusted that if the boy had any evil intention and, in his tale, had put it into the mouths of the two girls, she had said enough to warn him off and that, in addition, his own undoubted intelligence would suggest that the game would not be worth the candle.

A poet has stated that a boy's will is the wind's will and the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts. The poet had not been thinking of mayhem, but Dame Beatrice had had considerable experience of child criminals, enough to know that a vengeful infant takes little or no thought of possible consequences and is the more unpredictable and dangerous because of this.

There was one more incident on board ship before the party reached Athens, but this had nothing to do with Roger. The trouble began over the disputed possession of a book from the ship's library and ended in a full-scale row on one of the deck-tennis courts. Dame Beatrice heard an account of the former and happened to be an eye-witness to the latter of these unfortunate occurrences.

It appeared that Chloe had taken a book from the library shelves one hot afternoon and, finding the room cooler than the deck, had elected to read in there for an hour before going to the large lounge for tea. Theoretically, passengers signed for a book before removing it, but the rule was more honoured in the breach than in the observance, and the library steward was often on duty in the bar. Chloe usually

obeyed the rule and, as she was a voracious reader, usually took the book away with her and used it in her cabin as a soporific. On this occasion, not wishing to take it in to the lounge, she replaced it on its shelf, intending to return for it later and carry it down to the cabin she shared with Mary.

To her annoyance, when she went back for it later it was gone. She complained to the library steward and was rightly told that it had not been signed for and he could not say who had taken it out.

"Well, there's some slackness somewhere!" said Chloe crossly and unjustly, and she went off to find Mary.

"Oh, *that* book!" said Mary, who, prejudiced, no doubt, by her aunt's output, despised all romantic novels whether bad or good. "I believe I saw Hero with it."

"Then kindly go along and tell her that I am halfway through it. She can't have got far into the story yet, and she will quite understand that I have the prior claim."

Mary went unwillingly to fulfil this task and found Hero indisposed to part with the book.

"It was not signed for," she said, "so anybody had the right to take it, and I took it. Why not?"

"Did *you* sign for it?"

"I do not remember."

"Well, my aunt says you did not, and she wants to finish it, although goodness knows why. All that author's stories are tripe."

"I like them."

"Well, may I have the book?"

"No," said Hero decidedly, "you may not. If your aunt wants it so badly, let her come and explain why, not having signed for it, she should have it and not me."

Mary returned with this message, which, disliking both parties, she embroidered more than a little. Not to her surprise, her aunt indignantly refused to go in person to ask for the return of the book and, at dinner, pointedly ignored

Hero and, so far as she possibly could, kept her out of the general conversation.

On the following morning Mary received orders to keep an eye on the deck-tennis lists. There were only four courts, so, the ship's tournament being over, the deck steward had a plan for ensuring that a few selfish passengers did not monopolise these. His solution was to set up a blackboard opposite each court with a list of times marked out from ten o'clock onwards against which intending players put their initials with a stick of chalk provided for the purpose. At the end of their half-hour they were expected to give up the court to the next on the list.

As they passed out of the dining-room on the previous evening, Hero had said, pleasantly enough, to Chloe,

"I am sorry I took your book, but you had not signed for it, so I did not know anybody was reading it. I will keep it for tonight—I read quickly and I skip those parts I do not care for—so you shall have it in the morning when I go to play deck-tennis with Julian."

Chloe had made no acknowledgment of this promise but, with compressed lips and head held high, had gone to her cabin and did not appear in public again that evening. In the morning Mary, under orders and relishing the thought of a battle in which she need take no part, informed her aunt the moment she saw Julian put his initials and those of Hero up on one of the boards.

Still with compressed lips, Chloe took up one of the soft paper tissues she always carried, went on deck, rubbed out J.S. and H.M. and substituted C.C. and M.C.

"But, Aunt, you never play deck-tennis," said Mary, delighted with the manoeuvre and interested in its outcome.

"I am going to play today," said her aunt, "so come along. We must be absolutely ready to take the court over before those other two arrive to claim it."

As it happened, when they arrived they found the court in possession of the young couple who made up the number

at their dining-table and these, under Chloe's impatient and authoritative eye, surrendered the court a good five minutes before they were due to do so; therefore, when Julian and Hero turned up, it was to find an unskilful game going on on a pitch and at a time which Julian knew he had booked.

His reconciliation with Hero was more or less complete and he had been so pleased when she consented to the game that he turned it into a challenge match which he was determined to allow her to win. His annoyance, therefore, when he found the court was in use, changed to wrath when he looked at the board and realised what had happened. He walked on to the court and said,

"I think there's some mistake, Mrs. Cowie. This court is booked."

"Yes," said Chloe, "you are quite right, Mr. Suffolk. It was booked by me. If you look, you will see my initials on the board."

"Well, I assure you they were not there when I signed up directly after breakfast this morning."

"I was with him," said Hero, realising what had happened and having not the slightest objection to lying in a good cause. "I certainly saw him put the initials there."

"Oh, but *you* do not think signatures matter, any more than *I* do," said Chloe, with great sweetness, "so you can scarcely complain, can you?"

"Well, you'll have to get off the court," said Julian firmly. "I signed and this is a challenge match and we've brought Dame Beatrice along to umpire for us."

Dame Beatrice, who had been standing in the doorway of the engine-room casing which led to a companionway in the interior of the ship, came forward at the sound of her name.

"And did Dame Beatrice also see you sign the board, as you claim you did?" asked Chloe.

"No, I did not," said Dame Beatrice. "Has a question of prior right arisen? Why not toss a coin?"



"Because my initials are on the board, and Mr. Suffolk's are not," said Chloe. "Perhaps you would care to ask the deck steward to intervene, Mr. Suffolk."

"By Jove!" said Julian, grinning, and calling her bluff by lying in his turn. "I was talking to him when I put our initials on the board. He's sure to remember. I'll tackle him at once."

"Oh, well, in that case . . ." said Chloe, conceding defeat . . . "here you are! You've lost half your time, anyway." She hurled the deck tennis quoit from her and it struck Hero sharply and painfully on the ear. "I'm sorry," she added perfunctorily. "That was not intentional."

"No?" said Hero. "All the same, I kill you for it one of these days. You do not strike a Greek and go unpunished."

Dick and Simon were at Piraeus to meet the ship's party, but Henry Owen and Edmund had gone off on a botanising expedition to find specimens of spring-flowering cyclamens. Henry had read that *persicum* could be found on the Largarda Pass in the region of Sparta, although it was commoner on Crete and Rhodes. He was also in search of the smaller *mindleri* which had only one habitat and that was on Aegina. While he was in the Peloponnese he also intended to look for *repandum*, which, like the other specimens, flowered in the spring. He had ascertained that it grew in quantities in the Parori Gorge, near Mistra.

"I doubt, in fact," said Dick, who was sharing a taxi to their Athens hotel with Dame Beatrice, Chloe Cowie, and Mary, "whether we shall see very much of Henry and the two boys at any time while we are in Greece. He has no particular interest in archaeology, and certainly none in Apollo, but has great ideas of exploring the most inaccessible places in quest of these wild flowers and plants of his. He tells me that Greece has no fewer than six thousand species, and that one plant in every ten, or

thereabouts, is endemic and grows nowhere else in the world."

"It will be very disappointing for you, Ronald dear, if all three of them leave the party," said Chloe. "You thought we were to be one carefree, happy family. Still, it may be more peaceful without the two boys. Boys, I find, are apt to be noisy young animals with a very rudimentary sense of humour. If you will believe me, that wretched child Roger told me a cock-and-bull story of a plot to kidnap Dame Beatrice when we leave Athens for Delos. He talked about holding her to ransom—not he himself, of course, but the kidnappers."

"And who is to do the kidnapping?" enquired Dame Beatrice, interested in this second and even more unlikely flight of fancy on Roger's part.

"He did not say. I was rather short with him and did not allow him to finish his ridiculous story."

"What a pity," said Mary, "although I should be sorry for anyone who attempted to kidnap Dame Beatrice and hold her to ransom. Still, I do agree that we should be better off without those two boys. Edmund is loutish and Roger is a pest."

"I shall miss Henry's company, if they do go off on their own," said Dick. "It will not be at once, however. He wants to go to Delos with us because it seems that a particularly beautiful convolvulus grows there on the ruins. I think we may also look to have him with us at Corinth and at Delphi, from what he has told me, so there will be no need to break up the party altogether. By the way, I have taken the liberty of booking hotel rooms for you all, unless you have made other arrangements. We shall be in Athens for a week, and then the yacht will be available to take us to the islands."

"The yacht?" said Mary. "Do you mean a *private* yacht?"

"Yes. A friend is lending it to me. It is powered and carries a crew of two who will manage it with a little help at

times from Simon and myself, and it will sleep six of us in comfort."

"Six?" said Mary, on a note there was no mistaking.

"Simon, myself, and Hero, of course, and you three ladies. Naturally Suffolk will wish to travel with Owen and the boys," explained Ronald Dick. "It seemed the obvious division to make."

"Oh, yes, I see," said Mary. "Yes, of course." It was impossible to tell from her tone whether she found the arrangement satisfactory or not. Her aunt, however, was delighted.

"What is the tonnage of the yacht?" she enquired.

"I don't know," replied Dick, "but I am sure we shall be comfortable on board, and the crew, both Greeks, have an excellent knowledge of the coastline and the islands, and the younger of them, I am told, is a very good cook."

The party had been fortunate enough to arrive in Athens when the moon was at the full, and at dinner Chloe Cowie announced her intention of visiting the Acropolis by moonlight. She, Dame Beatrice, Mary, and Dick were seated at the same table. The others were at an adjacent one, towards which, hearing laughter, Mary often cast an envious eye. She was looking forward to the return of Henry Owen, for then she thought there might be a chance for her to join Julian's table while Henry took her place with the older members.

"I don't think I'll bother with the Acropolis," she said. "I think I'll have a long night and catch up with some of my lost sleep. We had some very late nights on board ship."

"Yes, you *were* a little selfish, I thought," said her aunt, "considering that you shared my cabin, and often came in during the small hours. Still," she added magnanimously (for the benefit of the rest of the table), "I suppose you enjoyed the dancing. Is anyone else of a mind to accompany me this evening?" She looked brightly around at the others.

Dame Beatrice, who had no intention of visiting the Acropolis in such uncongenial company—for nothing, so far, had caused her to revise her first impression of Chloe Cowie as a talkative and self-opinionated bore—said nothing. Ronald Dick, catching Chloe's speculative eye, said apologetically that he had a great deal of paper-work to get through, but that he was sure some of the young people would wish to join her. He added that the Acropolis by moonlight was not a sight to be missed, and that he only wished he were free to accompany her. Dame Beatrice wondered whether he had already changed his mind about making Chloe an offer of marriage, or whether the excuse of pressure of work was genuine.

It transpired that Simon could borrow a large American car in which Chloe was offered the front seat beside the driver, while Julian, Hero and Roger sat at the back. No sooner had they left the dining-table to go off on their expedition than Dick answered Dame Beatrice's mental query and seemed anxious indeed, to do so.

"Now we're alone," he said to her, "I wonder whether you would allow me to talk to you?"

"By all means," she replied, wondering what was coming.

"What I have to say must be said in confidence."

"I shall be honoured."

"The hotel has a pleasant, glassed-in adjunct to the lounge. We can obtain a view of the Acropolis from it. Besides, according to my knowledge, it will be almost deserted at this hour. Shall we take our coffee there?"

Seated opposite him at a small table, Dame Beatrice sipped her coffee and again wondered what Dick could have to say to her which could not be said except in private. He did not begin at once but, having asked her permission to smoke, he lit a thin black cheroot, leaned back and gave her time to look to where, on their airy hilltop, stood the moonlit monuments to the genius of the ancient Athenians.

When Dick spoke, he spoke abruptly.

"Do you believe in omens, Dame Beatrice?"

She turned towards him.

"That depends upon what you mean by omens," she said.

"Perhaps I should tell you the whole story."

"Do. And then perhaps I shall have something to tell *you*."

"You have not changed your mind about coming with us on our expedition?"

"Oh, no—at any rate, not yet."

"I'm glad of that, although there seems to be a lurking threat in your amendment."

"No, that is not what I intended to convey. But let us exchange confidences. Will you begin?"

"Twice, since I have been in Athens, I have been given warnings that our proposed expedition may be unwise."

"The country, of course, is full of unrest."

"Oh, this has nothing to do with politics. I never discuss the government or express any opinion about the régime, and I have always found the Greek savants most courteous and helpful. I used the word 'omens' a while ago, and really I can think of no other which would convey what I mean."

"Omens, of course, can be re-oriented."

"How do you mean?"

"By the exercise of ready wit, they may be made to indicate the opposite of what popular superstition attributes to them."

"Oh, you are thinking of the landing of William of Normandy at Bulverhythe. He fell as he leapt ashore, and this was regarded as unfortunate, but he exclaimed that he had taken seizin of the country with both hands."

"And it turned out that he was right. Equally quick of thought was Leotychidas of Sparta, who was told by the soothsayers that a proposed expedition was doomed to failure because a viper had become entangled with the key

to the city he proposed to take. He replied that the opposite meaning should be read into the omen: not that the viper dominated the key, but that the key had caught the viper."

"Well, I will rehearse to you my experiences and we will hope that you will be able to give me an optimistic interpretation of them. The first began with a note which was passed to me in the museum here."

"A note? That sounds more like a threat than an omen."

"Call it what you will. I found it extremely disturbing, not so much in itself as in what happened when I followed its instructions."

"This sounds the most ingenuous cloak-and-dagger story I ever heard!"

"I know," said Dick, "but when you have heard all you may see why I am worried. I admit to being an extremely superstitious man. Long association with Sir Rudri contributed to this, no doubt, for I have always been highly suggestible and his beliefs impressed me. Besides this, from my early childhood I have believed in signs, omens, and portents. Faced with the fact that the soothsayers, according to Shakespeare, could find no heart within the beast they sacrificed for Caesar, had I been he I am sure that nothing on earth would have persuaded me to go to the Capitol on the Ides of March." He laughed. Two people, a man and a girl at the other end of the viewing-lounge, looked round and then linked arms and stole away, so that Dame Beatrice and Dick had the place to themselves.

"Before I go on," he said, "I ought perhaps to tell you that both Henry Owen and I are in a mutually difficult position. This is beginning to sour a previously happy relationship."

"Mrs. Cowie, I presume."

"How did you guess?"

"Let us call it woman's intuition."

"You are sparing my feelings. I suppose I was rather obviously enamoured of her when you met her at my flat."

"Oh, no, not at all, but I could not help noticing Mr. Owen's proprietary attitude. Apart from that, you had told me that you proposed to make her an offer of marriage."

"Oh, so I did. Yes, well, when Henry came on the scene, I realised that my plan was liable to meet with opposition. We all dined with him at his hotel in Bournemouth when he first came into my neighbourhood to discuss the plans for our pilgrimage, and after that I found that he was constantly visiting Mrs. Cowie at her flat. It was most disquieting. You see, I cannot help realising that he has some notable advantages over me. He has good looks, vast physical strength, personal magnetism, and imagination. I lack all of these attributes."

"He also has two sons who will be living with him for some years yet, one supposes. I know nothing of Edmund's feelings, but, judging from their attitude towards one another on board ship, I would not say that Mrs. Cowie and Roger are exactly compatible."

"I doubt whether that would weigh with Henry. The boys have their tutor and their own quarters in Henry's large house in Wales, and later on they will be at College. There would be no need for Mrs. Cowie to see very much of them. Besides, I myself have Hero and Simon, so I have no advantage there."

"I would have supposed you had. Your ward and your adopted son are twenty years old, I believe. They will surely be off your hands reasonably soon."

"Hero dislikes Mrs. Cowie and Simon laughs at her. Well, Henry, having visited her at her flat a number of times, began to escort Mrs. Cowie to entertainments and to take her out in his car. As you may imagine, this nonplussed me and before we came away I asked him point-blank to what extent he was interested in Mrs. Cowie."

"And his answer was evasive, I feel sure."

"I don't know how you deduced that, but you are right. He said that Mrs. Cowie was a charming and well-informed

woman and that surely there was no reason why he should not find her society congenial. I know, too, because she told me so herself, that he had done his utmost to persuade her to fly out with us instead of going by sea. However, she pleaded that she could not allow her niece to travel alone on the ship . . .”

“She would not have been alone, as it happened, though, would she? Mrs. Cowie knew that I, too, was going by sea and could be trusted to look after the poor child during the cruise.”

“Why do you call her that?—the poor child?”

“For the best of reasons. She is poor, in the sense that she has no money of her own but is totally dependent on her aunt, and she is a child in the sense that she has no experience of the world—or so her aunt told me.”

“I suppose,” said Dick, “that, if I marry Mrs. Cowie, Mary will not expect to live with us?”

“There are less likely happenings, I’m afraid.”

“But Hero detests Mary.”

“Well, Hero is of marriageable age and is not likely to remain at home much longer, if I am any judge.”

“Is not Mary Cowie of about the same age as Hero?”

“She is a year or so older, perhaps, but there would not be much in it.”

“Then she must be marriageable, too, therefore I shall go ahead, and let Henry Owen make what he will of it! And now I have settled *that* in my mind, may I tell you my story?”

“About the omens? Please do, I am all ears.”

“The less alarming of my experiences took place in the museum here, and no later than this afternoon. I was looking at some of the sixth-century sculpture and had paused in front of the particularly fine bronze Apollo which was found at Piraeus only a dozen years ago, when the lad Roger who, with his tutor, was with me, said, ‘Why don’t you speak to it? Ask it to bless our pilgrimage.’”



"I turned towards him, thinking that he was jesting and, as I did so, the statue appeared to speak."

"My dear Mr. Dick!"

"Oh, I know. Either I am slightly mad—which I decline to believe—or else a ventriloquist or somebody with a tape-recorder was at hand."

"What did the statue appear to say?"

"It said: *By the bow they have taken from me*—you will recollect, no doubt, that the statue, when it was made, must have been holding a bow—there is a reference to Apollo's bow in one of the epigrams by Claudian, who addresses the god as 'swift Bowman' and there is still a short bit of the bow to be seen in the left hand of the statue . . ."

"The Apollo you mention has come to the museum since I was last in Athens, so I have not seen it."

"Be sure to go and look at it. Not only is it a remarkably fine thing in itself, but it is thought to be the earliest figure of any size—it stands just over six feet high—to be hollow-cast in metal."

"I will certainly go and admire it. But the rest of its remarks, what were they?"

"Ah, yes. *By the bow they have taken from me, let not the exquisite Clio take thee captive at thy midnight vigil, for, if she should die, thou shalt cross the Styx with her, but not until I have wreaked vengeance upon thy fellow-voyagers.*"

"The voice," said Dame Beatrice, "is the voice of Jacob, but the hands, I am inclined to think, are the hands of Esau. Those are Greek phrases which any schoolboy might be expected to know. Were all three of you standing together?"

"Not quite. I was opposite the Apollo, with Roger. Suffolk was looking at something else and was a little distance away. You note the voice said *Clio*?"

"The Muse of history."

"That's what makes it so alarming."

Dame Beatrice did not ask for an explanation of this remark, although it puzzled her.

“Young Roger, of course, is a fellow of infinite jest, but I should not have supposed that of Mr. Suffolk who, you say, was also with you in the museum,” she observed.

“No; like myself he is singularly without a sense of humour. In fact, I would have thought he had a strain of melancholy in him.”

“What did you do when you heard this voice? I take it, by the way, that it spoke in English?”

“No, it did not. It spoke in Greek. I gave you the rough translation. You said yourself that the phrases were such that a schoolboy would know, but I have my doubts about that.”

“And the voice? Was it that of a man, a woman, or a boy?”

“That is difficult. I had thought, until now, that the voice was that of a man, but it spoke in little more than a whisper, so I suppose it could have been a woman or a boy speaking. In fact, I demanded of young Roger what the joke was. He appeared to be very much surprised and asked me what I meant. I was not prepared to tell him that the statue seemed able to speak, so I passed it off and we all walked away. What do you make of it, Dame Beatrice?”

“Nothing, at present. What was the other experience you mentioned?”

“Oh, that, yes. It was quite as mysterious and far more frightening—physically frightening, if you know what I mean. At this time last week—well, not exactly at this time, because it was some two or three hours earlier—I received a note referring to our Apollo pilgrimage suggesting that I should visit the Acropolis at a time when there would be few people there, when I would be given some news which would be of help to me. I dined at eight, therefore, which, as you know, is unusually early for these parts, and left the hotel at a time when most people would be going in to dinner.

“Well, in any case it was early in the year for tourists and my correspondent’s idea that the Acropolis would be deserted, or nearly so, turned out to be correct.”

“Was the note signed?”

“No, nor could I hazard a guess as to the identity of the writer. I ought to add that Henry and Edmund had retired early, as they proposed to leave at sunrise on their expedition and that Simonides had gone to visit friends of ours who live in Piraeus.

“Henry had filled up the tank of my car—in spite of the coolness between us I had offered it to him as usual and I did not think I ought to make inroads on his petrol—and Simon had gone off in the one he borrows, so I took a taxi to the foot of the hill and told the man either to wait or to come back in an hour. I climbed up the steps to the Propylaea, picking my way with some care, for although, by daylight, the way is easy enough, by the light of a moon not at the full there were deep and treacherous shadows and parts of the ascent were very rough, for the marble steps (laid down by order, possibly, of the Emperor Claudius) end in some broken stonework which can be tricky at night.

“I came out past the plinth which once held the statue of Athena Promachos and then walked up to the Parthenon. I entered the *pronaos* and gazed out through the arches of the eastern colonnade. It was while I was standing there, with a hand on one of the fluted columns, that I became aware that I was not alone, but that my correspondent was with me. I don’t know what gave me my first feeling of fear, but perhaps it was because I don’t remember hearing any footsteps, or anybody cough, or having definite indication at all, in fact, of the presence of another person. Yet I was as certain as I could be that somebody else was there, and was standing not very far away from me.

“Why this should have made me uneasy I do not know, except that the assignation was a mysterious one, but, after all, every visitor to Athens comes to the Parthenon as a

matter of course and although, at night, those who visit it try to come at a time when the moon is full, there was still enough light to make a visit to these fabulously beautiful buildings well worth while, and it seemed a good place for a meeting. However, as I say, I felt suddenly uneasy. I turned and looked about me, but there was nobody to be seen, and it occurred to me that my neighbour must be standing behind one of the pillars.

"I turned and walked back by the way I had come, but still saw nobody and was not accosted. I persuaded myself that I had been imagining things and as I am by nature extremely timid I convinced myself that this was so. Glancing behind me, nevertheless, two or three times, I crossed to the Erechtheum, with its beautiful little Porch of the Maidens and I grieved, not for the first time, that one of the caryatides had been reft from her five sisters and was incarcerated in the British Museum, to be replaced in Athens by an easily identifiable changeling.

"Well, from the south side, as doubtless you remember, four of the stone, basket-topped maidens can be seen, but the steps in front of the plinth are broken up and are rough, weed-grown, and uneven. I did not need to surmount them, but was standing on the bare ground at the bottom when a voice said, 'The best place to worship Apollo nowadays is from the west side of Athena Nike.' I was startled, but concluded that this was my unknown correspondent."

"Did you recognise the voice?"

"No. It spoke in a hoarse whisper, and in English."

"But the speaker must have been very close to you if a whisper, however hoarse, carried to you in the open air."

"That is what I thought. I looked round again, but could see nobody. The dreadful thing was, Dame Beatrice, that, although I looked round for the speaker, I could have sworn that the words had come from one of the caryatides."

"But they were quite a distance from where you say you were standing."

"I know. I can't explain it, but there it is."

"Did you go to the little temple?"

"Yes," said Dick defiantly, "I did. I had come to look at the Acropolis as well as to contact my correspondent and I did not intend to leave out any part of it which I had made up my mind to examine."

"And you call yourself a timid man?"

"Oh, Athena Nike was on my way out. However, when I had looked at the little temple from the steps on the east side—the Ionic columns and the remains of the frieze are very fine—you may be sure that I was disinclined to go much further, for the west side stands near the top of a high, blank, retaining wall, and, apart from my sudden fear of my unknown adviser, I have not a very good head for heights if the drop is perpendicular."

"But nobody followed you, so far as you know?"

"Nobody. I could not have failed to see and hear whoever it was. I said, 'What do you wish to tell me?' There was no answer. My heart was beating in a most uncomfortable way and I did not stay very long. I made my way as quickly as I could to my cab. The driver had decided to wait. I suppose that, during the dinner time, there were few fares to be picked up in the city, so he thought he would make sure of mine."

"I was delighted to see him. I asked him whether anybody else had visited the Acropolis since I had left him, but he assured me that he had seen nobody. As all these fellows dream away their time and smoke or snooze when they've nothing to do and nobody with whom to gamble, I took little notice of his assertion. I am convinced that somebody followed me and intended to do me a mischief."

"And have your two mysterious experiences caused you to change your mind about our travels?"

"No," said Ronald Dick stoutly, "they have not. I undertook to make this pilgrimage to honour Sir Rudri's memory, and I am not going to be deterred. I wanted to

confide in another member of the party, however, and, sorry though I am to burden you with the knowledge that somebody seems to be against our project, you seemed much the best person with whom to share my fears."

"But I do not share them," said Dame Beatrice. "They have not communicated themselves to me. I think we have to deal with a practical joker, not an enemy agent, and the field of our enquiry into his identity is beautifully narrow."

"You mean that it must have been Henry or his son, or even Simon, who spoke on the Acropolis, since the rest of you were on board ship? I agree that it could have been one of them, although I felt certain that Henry and Edmund intended to go to bed. But then there was the time when I was in the museum."

"When neither Mr. Owen nor Edmund was there?"

"Or Simon, either, if it comes to that."

"To whom, in Athens, have you mentioned the expedition?"

"Oh, to several people, but I have not referred to its object. My friends think I am merely taking a party to look at some of the more interesting archaeological sites, that is all."

"And your friend who is lending you the yacht?"

"He knows nothing except that we plan to cruise among the islands."

"You have not mentioned the cult of Apollo or the reason for our pilgrimage to *anyone* outside our own party?"

"People would think I was eccentric."

"Well, Rudri Hopkinson most certainly was."

"I know, and I would not have people laugh at his memory."

"Well, we can afford to bide our time until our party is complete again. After that, who knows? Maybe we will hoist our practical joker with his own pétard."

"You comfort me a great deal, Dame Beatrice. You mean that there are two wags in our party and both are

harmless.”

Dame Beatrice did not comfort herself. Dick’s experience in front of the bronze Apollo was all very well if it were true. It could be dismissed as someone’s idea of a joke. A puerile sense of humour might well have been tickled by making a statue appear to speak. She was much less inclined to believe in Dick’s experience on the Acropolis. He was a nervous imaginative little man, and the night could have been fairly dark in spite of the moonlight. Furthermore, the Acropolis could be ghostly at such an hour. Apart from that, Dick had never, she thought, grown up. The whole nature of the Apollo pilgrimage indicated that. No one but a born hero-worshipper would have planned it, and hero-worshippers, in her opinion, were seldom mentally adult.

Another manifestation of his childishness was the way in which he had not refused a “dare.” He had been afraid to go to the temple of Athena Nike, but, like a boy unwilling to be jeered at for cowardice, he had gone, all the same. Whether, had he not lacked a head for heights, he would have walked round to the west side, where the Ionic columns were separated only by a flight of steps from the top of the sustaining wall, she could not and did not attempt to determine. His story of the voice she entirely discredited. She had even asked him to produce the note he had received, but he said he had thrown it away.

As to the identity of the ventriloquist in the museum, in spite of her contention that the field was narrow, it was impossible to determine, on the evidence available, which of the suspects was the joker, again allowing for the fact that Dick might have imagined the whole thing. She cast her mind back to the ship’s concert and the glee of Roger at the success of the ventriloquist act. If Percival Dearwater was the ventriloquist, then both Dick’s experiences had been subjective and could be ignored in consequence, but if

either Julian or Roger possessed the art of speaking from the stomach, then either of them could have been the joker in the museum. Anyway, it all seemed quite harmless and, but for the performance on board ship, she would have dismissed both Dick's experiences as fantasies.

Of course, if Dick really had heard a disembodied voice on the Acropolis, the chief suspect was Edmund. He was Roger's brother, they were closely allied and might possess the same warped sense of humour. She called to mind Roger's tall stories of murder and kidnapping. As for Edmund, he might be in collusion with his brother, the one to carry out the joke on the Acropolis, the other to repeat it in the museum.

There remained the uncomfortable possibility that, for some reason known only (so far) to himself, Dick had *deliberately* invented both experiences. Keeping this in mind, there was one thing she could do. The Dearwaters had come ashore in the same tender as herself and had told her that they were staying in Athens until a ship returned to pick them up in a fortnight's time. They had even told her the name of their hotel. Now that the ship's concert was a thing of the past, with nothing, it was to be assumed, but pleasant memories for Percival Dearwater, he would be prepared, she thought, to tell her which of the three of them had been the ventriloquist and which the supporting characters. She wanted to track down the joker—if there was one—because she could foresee trouble and confusion if he intended to make use of his talent on the pilgrimage itself.

On the following morning the hotel porter, an expansive, agreeable man with a magnificent moustache, connected her by telephone with the Dearwaters' hotel and ultimately with Mrs. Dearwater.

"Oh, Dame Beatrice! How nice of you to ring us up! Do come to lunch here, won't you? Two o'clock, but come before that, and we'll compare notes and have a drink.



Percy doesn't care for retzina or ouzo, but they suit me well enough. I never did care much about drinks, anyway," said Mrs. Dearwater in her plummy but agreeable voice.

There were no odious comparisons to be drawn between the hotel at which Dame Beatrice was staying and the one which she visited. The only notable difference was that from the latter there was no view of the Acropolis. Mrs. Dearwater was alone when Dame Beatrice arrived and apologised for her husband's absence.

"Percy is in bed," she explained. "He ate some shellfish last night. They never did agree with him, although he loves them. So there's only me." She rang for drinks and settled down for a cosy gossip, mostly about the people they had met on the ship. Dame Beatrice seized a favourable moment and said,

"Your husband was a great success at the concert."

"Oh, yes," agreed Mrs. Dearwater, beaming. "He was in his element over that, and people were very good in offering to do turns. Your young friends made quite a bargain with him, though. They agreed to perform, but only if he would join in with them in one particular act. It was to be a lot of spoof, of course."

"Oh, the ventriloquist thing!"

"Yes. It took people in completely and was lots of fun. Nobody could make out which of them was really doing it, and, of course, none of them was."

"Really? How was it worked, then? I was right at the back, and was completely taken in."

"So was everybody else, except the real ventriloquist. He was sitting in the front row of the audience, so Percy told me afterwards. He wouldn't go on the stage with them because, although he can throw his voice, he still has to move his lips, so people would spot him at once. Of course, they didn't have time to rehearse the act properly, that's why they all talked together so much, but luckily the

audience thought that made it all the funnier. They got a wonderful lot of laughs, didn't they?"

"Yes, indeed. It was quite the most successful act on the programme, although I thought your husband's conjuring tricks were extremely skilful, too."

"Yes, he's greatly in request at children's parties down our way, although, naturally, not for money. He only does it to please friends. It was a pity he couldn't have used his best props, but, of course, we couldn't bring the magic cabinet and the circular saw on board with us."

"And who discovered that we had a ventriloquist on board—your husband?"

"Oh, your boy Roger, I think, told Percy about it."

"So the ventriloquist was Mr. Suffolk, Roger's tutor?"

"I really have no idea, Dame Beatrice. My husband wouldn't tell me because he said it would queer the man's pitch if he ever wanted to do the thing again on another cruise. Cruising becomes a holiday habit, you know, and the same people go year after year. This was our fifth, as a matter of fact, and I found that we knew quite a number of the people on board. I wanted to know who the man was, but Percy says I babble and would be sure to let it out, not meaning to, of course, so he wouldn't tell me. Putting two and two together, I think it *must* have been Mr. Suffolk. He was certainly in the front row. Tell me, is he engaged to that lovely girl with the black hair?"

"Not so far as I know."

"Oh? Not that I want to tattle or pry, of course, but he seemed to be in and out of her cabin a good deal, and when he wasn't in it, *she* wasn't, either—or so it seemed to me. She was on our deck, you know, and in the same little corridor thing, so I knew quite a bit about the comings and goings."

Dame Beatrice remembered Roger's remark about sleeping on deck to oblige Suffolk.

“We’re only young once,” she said tolerantly, “and must gather the rosebuds where we find them, I suppose.”

She went back to her hotel to think things over. There seemed no reason, she told herself, why anybody should want to frighten Ronald Dick, and, in any case, the performance of the ventriloquist act on board ship had been nothing but innocent fun. The same could be said of Dick’s experience in the Athens museum except that, if one coupled it with his story of the voice and the presence on the Acropolis, it could mean, as she had already thought, that somebody did not want the Apollo pilgrimage to take place.

She went over in her own mind the various people who were involved in it and could see that there might be five who had had no choice—or very little—about joining the party. Neither of the boys may have wanted to accompany their father, and there was the possibility that Julian was not a volunteer but a pressed man. He might have thought that a vacation on his own in late spring would be far more desirable than to act as bear-leader to his pupils in Greece.

Against this there was the attraction which Hero had for him. By the time the voyage was over there was no doubt about his feeling for her, although to what extent this was reciprocated was not obvious. All the same, it followed that, although he might have made some attempt to sabotage the pilgrimage while the party was still in England, it was impossible to imagine that he would want to end it once he and Hero were in Greece.

That left Hero herself, Simonides, although there was no evidence that either was a ventriloquist, and Mary Cowie, but the same objection applied to her. On the other hand, *if* either girl had the art, she and not Julian could have been the performer on board ship, and that sounded like Mary, as Mrs. Dearwater seemed to think that the real performer had been in the front row of the audience and not on the stage. All the same, neither girl could have been the person on the

Acropolis, although either might have been in hiding in the Athens museum.

She dismissed the whole thing from her mind, but decided to keep a watch on Ronald Dick. A man who might be suffering from hallucinations was not the ideal leader of a party which included impressionable and irresponsible young people. Besides she had a feeling that Dick was obsessed with some anxiety which had nothing to do with Apollo or with mysterious voices.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### **Urania, the Muse of Astronomy**

“Verily we nourish and bring up a Sibylline prophetess, which by the view of a candle can divine of celestial things . . .”

“First,” said Ronald Dick, “a short briefing.”

“I thought a briefing *had* to be short,” muttered Roger to his brother.

“No, it’s the same thing as a lawyer’s brief—yards and yards of it, with refreshers and retainers and all the rest,” Edmund muttered back. “Wish we had some beer.”

He and his father had returned to Athens on the previous day and the whole party was now on the yacht at Piraeus. Henry, his sons, and their tutor were there only for the conference, and would return to Athens for the night and take the local steamer in the morning. The others would sail for Mykonos, spend the night on board, and pick up the Owen family and Julian to go across to Delos. After that, the yacht, in Edmund’s phrase, would be coming apart at the seams, since the plan was that it would accommodate the whole party while it visited Naxos, Amorgos, and Santorin and then sailed back to Nauplia on the mainland.

The briefing may have seemed short to the leader of the expedition, but it was less so to his hearers. However, sprawled out on deck in the spring sunshine, the ozone tangy with an inescapable suggestion of sewage, the

younger members of the company listened with not more than half an ear. Hero and Simonides smoked Turkish cigarettes while Edmund and Roger played surreptitious noughts and crosses in their shadow, and Mary attempted to indulge in a mild flirtation with Julian, giving him secret smiles and interrogatory glances. She had been trying hard to make up to him ever since the unfortunate affair of the disputed deck-tennis court. Julian was heartily sick of her and agonisingly jealous of the joyous reunion which had taken place between Hero and Simonides.

Except for Ronald Dick, who was leaning back against the rail while he discoursed, the older members were lying back in deck-chairs, Dame Beatrice with her quick black eyes taking in everything while she appeared to be intent only on taking in what Dick was saying, Henry Owen almost asleep, and Chloe Cowie apparently interested in nothing but the diamonds flashing in a half-hoop on her engagement finger. Nobody, so far, had mentioned this ring, although the two girls, of course, had noticed it. As they were not now on speaking terms because of Julian, they had not discussed its significance, although Mary, whose future it placed in jeopardy, would have given much to confide in a female contemporary.

To Dick it mattered nothing that his audience was inattentive. He was accustomed to being disregarded and would have been surprised and perturbed to find himself a centre of attraction. His monologue was intended for his own benefit much more than for that of the others, and was a mental review of what he expected from the pilgrimage.

"One thing I wish to make clear," he said, "in case any of you have felt any doubts or scruples, and that is that although we may like to think of our excursion as a pilgrimage, no thought or suggestion of pagan worship is involved. We shall approach each temple and shrine in a spirit of reverence, of course, but it will be with reverence for the past, not reverence of the god.

“Not but what, in the older world, Apollo stood for anything but the best and the highest in Greek thought. Apart from the fact that his was the second place in the hierarchy, second only to that of Zeus himself, he was regarded by his worshippers as the averter of evil, the presider over religious observances and laws, the arbiter of expiation, the god who communicated with man by means of prophecies and divine oracles. Even his humblest and most unlettered worshippers made him the protector of their flocks and herds and of themselves against plagues and diseases, for Asclepius, god of healing, was his son.

“Apollo was the god of music and dance, and although he was known, like his father Zeus, to pursue love affairs with mortal girls, the Homeric hymn in his honour is nobly conceived and his best-known title of *Phoebus* means ‘the pure one,’ or ‘the shining one.’

“He was regarded as law-giver to various city states and he had the power to purify even murderers, provided that they were not morally guilty or else had made restitution for their sin. Among (probably, I think) the more ignorant, he was given various other names. For instance, to some he was known as Apollo Smintheus, the mouse-god; to others he was variously called Panopion, the god who rid the fields of grasshoppers; Lykeios, the wolf-god, although whether as the friend of wolves or as a protector against them seems uncertain, and in some districts he was Sauroctonus, the lizard-killer, and he had various other titles. At Delphi, his most sacred shrine, his name of Agyieus was on a stone pillar, and it is likely that similar pillars were set up in front of Greek houses to bring them under the god’s protection.”

“So was an image of Hekate similarly set up,” said Hero softly, as the leader paused, “and she was not only regarded as an averter of evil, but was the goddess of ghosts.”

“That is true,” said Dick. “She was a migrant from Asia Minor, as, according to some authorities, although others

disagree, was Apollo himself, and she seems to have reached Greece somewhere about the sixth century. She was praised by Hesiod, and does indeed seem to have had some affinity with Apollo, for she was sometimes identified with his twin sister Artemis."

"Nevertheless," said Hero, throwing her cigarette-end into the sea, "because of a universal belief in and fear of ghosts, offerings were made to her with averted eyes, and at crossroads, and on dark, moonless nights." She crooned these words while staring evilly at Chloe Cowie.

"The feature least acceptable to the modern mind in the worship of Apollo," went on Dick, "is that his priests and seers tended to fall into hypnotic trances, at which times they made ecstatic prophecies, or, as we might consider it, they gave vent to wild and extravagant ravings. Heraclitus tells us of a sibyl foaming at the mouth as, urged by the god speaking through her, she uttered almost unbelievable prophecies, but this, of course, was part of the darker side of the Apollo cult, leading, as it did, to all kinds of superstitious beliefs and terrors. On the other hand, it was Apollo who disciplined and regulated the phallic rites connected with the worship of Dionysos, and Plutarch reminds us of the friendly connexion between the two cults, Apollo being depicted on the sculptured gable-ends of the temple at Delphi surrounded by the Muses, while Dionysos, opposite him, was attended by satyrs and maenads."

"There's a vase-painting—red-figured, fifth century—showing the same scene," said Edmund, surprisingly, looking up from his game. "Personally, I very much prefer Dionysos. There must have been a rare lot of fun with him. All those women with St Vitus' Dance . . ." He broke off, laughing, and gazed boldly and insolently at Chloe Cowie. Chloe looked down at her half-hoop of diamonds and Mary remarked acidly that it sounded to her like the outbreak of contagious witchcraft in Salem.



"Or Agnes Sampson's two hundred," murmured Henry Owen, whom most of the company believed to have been asleep.

"When is your birthday?" Mary suddenly demanded of Julian in the pause which succeeded Henry's unexpected remark.

"April fourteenth," he replied, "so it's a bit late in the day if you thought of giving me a present."

"I wasn't thinking of that," said Mary seriously. "I couldn't afford to, anyway," she added, with an enigmatic glance towards where her aunt was fidgeting with the diamond half-hoop. "I was thinking—well, wondering—which of us, if any, could best claim protection from Apollo if we needed it. What do you say about that, Mr. Dick?"

"As Apollo was known to country folk as Karneios, which means the Ram, and as April fourteenth comes under Aries, the sign of the Ram—you will remember the legend of the Golden Fleece—Julian would certainly be able to claim protection, I think," said Hero. For the first time since their introduction to one another at Dick's flat in Dorset, she favoured Mary with a warm and friendly smile. "What a nice game you suggest we play," she went on. "Your birthdays, please, all of you, and we will place bets on which shall have the best protection from Apollo. Who wishes to play?"

"We will all play," said Simonides, "but before we begin, let it not be forgotten that, in addition to his other names, the god was called *Pythian* Apollo."

"What does that matter?" asked Roger, who was tired of noughts and crosses and more than tired of the conversation.

"It matters," replied Simonides impressively, "because it refers to his slaying the Pytho, the she-dragon, and although this was undoubtedly a justifiable action, by his own rules the god needed purification for murdering her. From this time, he was also known as the Destroyer and all

sudden deaths were thereafter attributed to him, so I commend to him my soul."

"But that's blasphemy!" cried Mary, looking at her aunt.

"Really!" protested Chloe. "You Greek children have the most *morbid* minds!"

"Ah, thanks to Papa Ronald, we have acquired a good deal of useless but interesting knowledge," said Hero. "I will now add that Apollo was also known as Helios, the sun-god. Let none of you forget—" she looked in less friendly fashion this time at the fair-skinned, light-haired Mary—"that there is such a thing as sunstroke, and sunstroke, if severe enough, can *kill*."

"The god has yet another appellation which may bear upon your remarks, dear child," said Dame Beatrice. "I believe that at Delphi he was known not only as the Pythian Apollo, but also as Apollo Loxius, which has been translated as 'the Ambiguous.'"

"Really!" exclaimed Chloe Cowie again. "I am becoming seriously alarmed at the idea of travelling with some of you learned people! I suppose you have all noticed *this*?" She waved her left hand at them so that the diamonds sparkled more brilliantly than ever in the sun. "I shall waive my right to travel on this yacht to Mykonos, but shall go in the company of Henry, my affianced husband. We will meet the rest of you later, when perhaps all this uncomfortable erudition will have burnt itself out."

"Oh, I say!" cried Roger, turning eagerly towards her before anyone else could speak. "Can I have your berth on this boat, then, Mrs. Cowie?"

"That is for Mr. Dick to decide," said Chloe in a magnanimous tone. Dick, who, it was clear, had had no previous knowledge of the engagement, since, man-like, he had not seen the significance of her ostentatious display of the half-hoop of diamonds, looked astounded. Henry Owen said, smiling a little self-consciously at the company before he turned to Chloe,

"But you'd be much more comfortable on this boat than by taking the steamer with me and the boys, my dear girl. Besides . . ."

"Oh, Mary, of course, will come along, too," said Chloe. "I would not think of it otherwise."

"Then I had better take charge of Roger if he is to stay on the yacht," said Julian. "That will be an excellent arrangement." He looked meaningly at Hero.

"Not Roger!" said Mary, loudly and hysterically. "I want to stay on the yacht."

Everybody looked surprised except Dame Beatrice, who regarded the rebellious girl with a kindly leer.

"Really, Mary!" said Chloe. "Of course you will accompany me to the hotel and travel on the steamer with us. Mr. Owen and I are not yet married, and Edmund can scarcely be regarded as a chaperone."

At this Mary gave a shriek of semi-hysterical laughter.

"A chaperone—at your age?" she shouted. "You stupid fool! Anyway, you'll never marry Owen! And I'm not at your beck and call any more! Why should I be? I'm sick and tired and *damned* of being your servant. No, I'm not even a servant, because I don't get paid and I've got no rights and I've got no regular hours and I—and I . . ."

She broke down and sobbed. Everybody except Dame Beatrice and Chloe looked uncomfortable. The latter said:

"Well, now, really, Mary! After all I've done for you!" The former said,

"Mr. Dick, is there anything to drink on board?"

"Yes," said Simon, "I took care of that." He rose to his feet in one sinuous, serpentine movement and disappeared below. Edmund, to the surprise of everybody except his brother, went over and sat by Mary where she lay sprawled face-downward on the deck and patted her gently between the shoulder-blades.

"Buck up, girl," he said. "Be a sport." He began to massage her thin back and fondle her hair. By the time

Simon had made two journeys, one for the bottles and another for the mugs, she was sitting up and dabbing at her swollen eyelids and saying that she was sorry she had been such a fool.

“So the lamb goes off to be slaughtered,” said Hero cynically, when Mary and the others had gone ashore. “I wonder what Mrs. Cowie will have to say to her when they get to their rooms at the hotel?”

The paid crew of the yacht, which was named *Ilium*, consisted of a father and son. The son had rowed Henry, Chloe, the apparently repentant Mary, and a thoughtful Edmund to the shore in the yacht's tender, and on his return the *Ilium* raised anchor. She was powered, and as Dick knew nothing of sailing and the Greek crew of father and son asked for no orders but appeared to take it for granted that the engine and not the sails would be used, the shores of the mainland soon slipped by and the pilgrimage might be said to have begun.

Before the others had left the yacht Hero had insisted upon finding out everybody's birthday, and that afternoon, the crew having rigged up an awning so that the remaining passengers could remain on deck without discomfort, she announced that she had made a book on the pilgrimage based upon the odds for or against the safety of the members of the party according to their stars.

“So, by birthdays,” she said, “we have like this: with full protection from Apollo, so the odds are very short and I am generous to offer evens, are myself and Simon, Papa Ronald, Dame Beatrice, Edmund, and Julian. You see, Julian is under Aries the Ram, a very good sign for Apollo, as we have seen. Then Simon and I are Gemini, that is the Twins, because, strange to tell you, we have the same birthday, May thirty. I think it means, in the stars, Castor and Polydeuces, although really Helen was twin also, but no

matter, all were born from eggs like duck-billed platypus in Australia. Anyway, Aries the Ram carried twin children, Helle and Phrixus, over the Hellespont (only, unfortunately, he dropped Phrixus). Also Apollo and his sister Artemis are twins, so there, I think, all twins come under full protection from Apollo, which means Simon and me, even if our mother is not the same."

"It seems reasonable to suppose so," said Dame Beatrice, "but as Mr. Dick, Edmund, and myself are Sagittarians, why are we also favoured?"

"Well, Sagittarius is the Archer," explained Hero. "Did you not see the bronze Apollo in the museum at Athens? Apollo was holding a bow until it got broken off, therefore I offer the same odds for you as for Aries and Gemini, only it is a paradox, because these odds are evens."

"Too right," said Roger. He drew an imaginary bowstring to his ear and opened his thumb and forefinger, emitting a loud twang from the back of his nose. Julian said,

"There are more of us to come. What about Roger? What are the odds on *him*?"

"Well," said Hero, "he is Leo, and here there is doubt. Still, I think perhaps all is right, really, if we remember the stone lions on Delos. We are to visit Delos on this trip and we will pay respect to the lions, so I think Leo will count, although the lions mark the way to the temple of Leto, not Apollo."

"Good-o," said Roger. "Is anybody else a Leo?"

"Nobody. Mary is Virgo, and I cannot make up my mind whether she can claim protection or not, but I think she is unlucky in her stars, anyway, if her aunt marry your papa."

"Oh, to hell with that! She never will. Don't let's talk about it. You haven't quoted the odds on me yet," said Roger. "I suppose I get evens, like the others."

"Oh, no, you cannot have evens. It is not so certain as all that about you. I think I give you three to one."

"I'll buy a parcel of myself for that, then. I shan't need Apollo, anyway. I can look after myself."

"You climb rocks, though," said Simon, "don't you? It could be dangerous. I wouldn't accept those odds, if I were you."

"Oh, Simon, not to discourage him," said Hero.

"I'll take three to one against him," said Simonides.

Roger gave Simonides a punch in the ribs which made him gasp, and in a moment the two were rolling on the deck in a grapple which was a good deal less than friendly. Hero stood up and kicked them indiscriminately.

"Stop it, both of you, you stupid boys," she said. "You interrupt me. I have not finished. Now, then, I have come to Mary, as I said. At first I thought she was at about the same odds in the betting as Roger, but now I find myself puzzled. You see, Virgo is the Maiden, and there is the story of Daphne, who is changed into a laurel tree when she is pursued by Apollo. She cannot, therefore, be under his protection, because she was protected *from* him, but there is a complication which shortens the odds a little, because all maidens come under the protection of Artemis, sister to Apollo. What is more, one of Apollo's emblems is the laurel, so, you see, he may protect girls after all, being very sorry about chasing Daphne."

"What are the odds?" asked Simon. "I will buy as many shares in Mary as I can afford. She is not of those to whom things happen. She is just an English unofficial rose and would be perfectly safe anywhere. Look at the way she gave in after making that so spirited outburst."

"I offer four to one on Mary," said Hero. "I keep all my odds very simple and straightforward because I am not good at arithmetic. I do not understand all this hundred to eight thing. It is too complicated."

"What about long-priced outsiders?" asked Julian.

"Personally, I'm always game for a gamble."

“Well,” said Simon, looking over Hero’s shoulder, “we’re left with Mrs. Cowie, soon—” he glanced at Dick—“to become Mrs. Owen. Also we have Mr. Owen himself.”

“Dad ought to get some protection,” said Roger, “if only from that stepmother person I am not going to have, so, whatever the odds are, I shall try to shorten them.”

“He is under Scorpio,” said Hero. “I will give six to one. He is a botanist, too, and if there is a rare plant he will climb up to reach it, or he will go out in the hot sun, or he will place himself in the power of some unscrupulous guide who will push him down a mountain and rob him of his wallet, perhaps.”

“If Apollo could slay Pytho, would he burke at a mere scorpion?” asked Dame Beatrice, mildly amused by the conversation.

“That is a thought,” agreed Hero. “Very well, I offer three to one on Mr. Owen. Leaves the future Mrs. Owen. She is under Capricorn.”

“Then she ought to be safe,” said Dick in his mild way. “Goats could be used as sacrificial animals, for they were valuable and surely would have been acceptable if they were offered to Apollo by the herdsmen.”

“Three to one, then,” said Hero, “because goats are also very sure-footed. Who offers to make a wager? Simon is my clerk and will take the bets and ensure that nobody is cheated.”

“We’ll have to keep the book open for a bit. We must give the steamer party a chance to take a piece of this,” said Simon. “It would be unfair to leave anybody out. Why don’t we heave to and have a swim?”

At Mykonos there was a slight complication.

“We do not go to Delos,” said the two-men crew.

“Not go to Delos? But why not?” Dick enquired. He spoke without heat, having been so long accustomed to the

Irish attitudes of Greek workmen as to realise that some cock-eyed logic lay behind the refusal.

"Because," said Archimedes, the father, "it is understood that one goes to Delos by caique."

"It is the custom," said Orestes, his son, a thin, brown youth with the hyacinthine-black hair of his race.

"I think they have a relative who wishes us to hire a little boat," said Hero. "I shall talk to them." She proceeded to do so in a flood of modern Greek which even Dick found impossible to follow. The father and son replied in an equally impassioned style and with wide expressive gestures indicative of astonishment, protest, and downright incredulity. Suddenly the argument was at an end. There were smiles and handshakes all round, and the newly-appeased crew brought the yacht faultlessly to moorings.

"I explain," said Hero, "that you pay just the same for hire of the uncle's boat, but that we must remain on board and that, when we have seen Mykonos, they will wait to meet the rest of our party, and take us, all of us, to Delos, the uncle's caique being paid for just the same."

"But the rest of our party will land on Mykonos as soon as the steamer puts in," said Dick, "and hire their own caique, as is the custom, for Delos. There was no real need for us to come to Mykonos at all, as I tried to explain to them earlier. We could have had an extra day on Delos under my original arrangement."

"I wish very much to stay on Mykonos," said Simon. "It is gay here, and Dame Beatrice will wish to purchase souvenirs. Besides, the white houses are so pretty, and the streets are so narrow and there are so many it is like a maze. Then there are the little squares—so charming—you will all enjoy it so much. I like very much to stay here."

"We do like Papa Ronald says," said Hero, giving him a warning glance.

"Oh, I am willing to be at your disposal," said Dick, with the indulgence he always accorded his adopted son and his



ward.

“So we please Papa Ronald,” said Hero emphatically, “and we go to Delos, as he wishes, and meet the rest of them there.”

Delos was very much smaller than Mykonos and it appeared, unlike the gay and popular island, to be covered in ruins. It was composed of nothing more than a great chunk of granite and gneiss, eroded fantastically by the waves and the weather. Even the landing-place seemed to be among ruins, and, besides being bare and treeless, the island was without streams. Even the Sacred Lake was completely dry. Water for the island was collected in hillside cisterns when it rained.

A modern jetty, at which the yacht tied up, separated the ancient sacred harbour, which was partly enclosed by a strangely-shaped horned peninsula of bare rock, from the modern commercial dock. Nearby was the ancient *agora* and north of this the reputed Shrine of the Bulls and the precinct of Apollo.

Simonides expressed his disappointment.

“I wish to have remained on Mykonos,” he said. “Here everything is so dead. It depresses me. I shall go back there.” He exchanged glances with Hero.

The crew’s relative who, having been hired, had faithfully followed the yacht into harbour, and took the crew and Simon back to Mykonos in his boat. If Dick was disappointed that his adopted son had deserted the pilgrimage even for one night, he gave no sign of it. He asked what Simon would do for accommodation, but Hero assured him that there were plenty of people with rooms to let on Mykonos, and this he knew to be true, since, the moment the party had landed on the holiday island, touts of all descriptions had surrounded them, making spirited offers of rooms in the local houses.

"I think," he said to the remainder of the party, "that I should like to go ashore alone this evening to pay my respects to Sir Rudri's memory. It is fitting, I think, that I should visit the birthplace of Apollo alone." Dame Beatrice agreed, and Roger, who had his own ideas as to what was fitting, watched him go ashore and then went to her and asked whether she would mind if he went exploring on the island for an hour or so.

Sympathising with his desire for more physical activity than the resources of the yacht could provide, she laid only two injunctions upon him. He was to avoid all contact with Dick, who must be left to his own devices, and he must return to the yacht in time for supper. She meant by this that she did not want him to explore among rocks and broken masonry after dark, but was far too tactful to say so. Roger promised that he would come back in plenty of time for the evening meal. As, in the absence of the crew, he had decided to cook this himself and was greatly looking forward to having the run of the boat's stores and of being in sole charge of the tiny galley, she was hopeful that the promise, barring circumstances beyond his control, would be faithfully kept.

He told her nothing about his shore-going when he returned, but went zestfully below to begin the culinary preparations. Dick returned half an hour later and joined her in the comfortable saloon. He was silent while he poured out sherry, which she preferred to anything native to the country, and he remained silent until he had recharged the glasses. Then he said:

"Dame Beatrice, have you ever had premonitions?"

"I have never called them that," she replied. "You refer, no doubt, to a feeling that disastrous events may occur in the near future. I have always found, however, that the feeling is based on matters which can be foreseen and that therefore, more often than not, the dangerous situation can be averted."

"I refer to this ridiculous gambling game which Hero has invented."

"I believe the idea originated with Mary Cowie, when she asked Julian Suffolk for his date of birth."

"Yes, but it was Hero who took up the idea and turned it into this foolish and dangerous business."

"Foolish it may be, but why do you consider it dangerous?"

"I hardly know. One can hardly call it impious, I suppose, to invoke the protective powers of Apollo, since nobody worships him nowadays . . ."

"'And all the train that loved the stream-bright side  
Of the poetic mount with him are gone  
Beyond the shores of Styx and Acheron.  
In unexploréd realms of night to hide,'"

quoted Dame Beatrice in her beautiful voice.

"Yes, exactly. All the same—"

"And yet, you know," Dame Beatrice went on, "she<sup>\*</sup> continues by referring to 'some nameless power of nature,' and concludes:

'The shepherds meet him where he herds the kine.  
And careless pass him by, whose is the gift divine.'

"So you *do* think there might be something! How heartily Sir Rudri would have agreed with you!" exclaimed Dick.

"Suppose you tell me all about it," suggested Dame Beatrice, putting down her glass.

"Well, of course, I've been on Delos before. The French dig here, you know, and I've always been interested in their work. By this I mean that I know my way about the excavations. I thought I would go first to the Terrace of the Lions. It leads to the remains of the temple of Leto and towards where the sacred palm tree is supposed to have stood, and under which the god and his sister were born.

“On the way I loitered, admiring all the remarkable and painstaking work of the French archaeologists. First I lingered in the *agora*, which is easily reached from this mole, and then threaded my way through to the Hypostyle Hall. From there I went to the Lion Terrace, intending to proceed to the Leto temple and, only after all that, to come back to my main objective, the temple of Apollo. I mention all this by way of introduction because I wish to make it clear that, if anyone had so wished, it would have been a simple matter to follow me and that there would be plenty of cover, actually, for anybody who had been minded to track my movements.”

“But why should anyone wish to follow you?” Dame Beatrice asked, her mind busy with recollections of Dick’s revelations of his experiences on the Acropolis and in the Athens Museum. She found that she was beginning to have more doubts about the little man’s mental equilibrium. Could he be suffering from persecution mania, she wondered.

“Well, that is what I ask myself,” said Dick. “Why should anyone wish to follow and annoy me? But, as you see, I am not willing to accept a supernatural explanation of my experience if a natural reason for it can be entertained.”

“Pray continue. Your narrative promises to be most interesting.” Was this going to be another ventriloquist outbreak, she wondered. If so, it must involve either Julian or Roger.

“Well, I got no further than the Lion Terrace. If you have not actually seen it, no doubt you have seen photographs. It consists of a number of figures made of marble from Naxos and dating from the seventh century. These lions are not all of the same size, and were probably dedicated by different Naxian families in rivalry, it seems, with one another, for Naxos at the time—somewhere between 625 and 600 B.C.—held lordship over Delos.

“Well, as I reached the first of these majestic archaic sculptures, it spoke to me.” He paused in a manner which indicated that he was giving her a chance to ask a question, but she remained silent. This shook Dick. He gulped and then went on, “I suppose you think it was a ventriloquist again, do you? I am bound to say that what with the vast loneliness, the bare ground, the dark mountain, the stark pillars in the distance, the wide sky and the utter silence, I was, I am not ashamed to admit, extremely startled, no matter what was the explanation of the voice.”

“What did the lion say?”

“Oh, a lot of gibberish.”

“In English?”

“No, in Greek.”

“What kind of gibberish?”

“Oh, tags of this and that, you know—nothing which made much sense.”

“For instance?”

“Well, translated it went something like this: ‘He is a plotter without a sense of shame. All he wants is to make a profit for himself. We only joined this expedition to please him, and now he has tripped us up and thrown us off our balance. We are entitled to compassion. Be merciful to us, remembering your own father. At first Clytemnestra would not listen. She was a sensible woman. But now he has carried her off to his house and, owing to your cowardice, she is his willing captive.’ That was it, so far as I can remember.”

“Dear me!” said Dame Beatrice. “It reminds me vaguely of extracts from the first book of *The Iliad* coupled with snippets from *The Odyssey*. Set your mind at rest, my dear Mr. Dick. This is a piece of schoolboy mischief like the other—nothing more.”

The boat bringing passengers by public transport from Mykonos docked at about a quarter to ten on the following morning, and the crew of the caique, bringing Simon, were a

little earlier. Reunited, the Apollo party roamed the island with other sightseers, visited the excavations, and climbed to the sacred cave on Mount Kynthos past the Roman house. They inspected the ancient cisterns, home of innumerable frogs, saw the Temple of Isis, partly reconstructed and now the most beautiful of the ruins, and from the summit of the mountain, after an easy climb, they obtained a view of the rest of the Cyclades. Gazing at the circle of green islands, the blue of the sea, and the even wider blue of the sky, Henry Owen was moved to utterance. He took possession of Chloe Cowie's not unwilling hand and murmured amorously.

"Blue for the hope of thee, green for the joy of thee!"

"Her name is not Eiladh," said Hero, who overheard him and whose reading appeared to be wide. "And I myself," she added, sotto voce, "would not call her 'a bonnie wee lass.'"

Dick had intended the next stage of the pilgrimage to be to the giant statue of Apollo on Naxos and to the sixth-century temple on the tiny island called Palati, but when he mentioned that the statue might not be that of the god, and that of the temple nothing but a doorway twenty feet high was left standing, the others, except for Dame Beatrice, who did not care either way, put it to him that, as there were other and perhaps more rewarding sites to visit, the pilgrimage should by-pass Naxos and Amorgos, and go on to Santorin, where they wanted to visit the hill-town of Thera.

"There's a fortune-teller on Amorgos," said Julian casually, "or so I read somewhere or other. I believe he does it with coffee grounds, but I suppose anybody who knows the symbolism could tell your fortune that way, if you believe in that kind of thing."

"You don't mean *you* could?" demanded Chloe.

"Oh, yes," replied Julian, in an off-hand tone. "I used at one time to do it to amuse people—girls, of course. It was

one of my parlour tricks when I was at College. You'd be surprised how popular it was."

"But I can tell you don't believe in it," said Mary.

"Oh, as to that, well—no. All the same, I can recall one or two pretty odd coincidences. There's one, in fact, that I shall never forget. One of the girls had the sign for death in her cup. Of course I didn't tell her that. I told her she'd soon be taking a long journey. She was killed in a car crash ten days later. Mere coincidence, of course, but there it was."

"We will have a séance tonight in the saloon," said Hero, "and Julian shall tell us who is going to die."

"My dear Hero, we are *all* going to die," said Dick, in a tone of mild expostulation, "and in any case, as Julian has just told us, he very rightly does not play upon people's feelings to any serious extent, so he certainly will not pander to your morbid curiosity."

"Oh, come now, Papa Ronald!" protested Hero, getting up from her deck-chair and standing behind his with her hands around his neck. "Not to be so stuffy! I spoke only in fun. But we shall have our séance, just the same, won't we?"

"Unless you'd prefer to have me read your hand," said Roger. "*I'm* not squeamish. I'll tell each of you just how long you have to live. This is the line to look at." He stood with his back to the rail, facing the row of deck-chairs, and held up his right hand palm outwards. With the forefinger of his left hand he traced the long vein which ran from above the thumb down to the wrist. "My own life will be a short and a merry one," he said.

"It'll be short, all right, if you don't sit down and shut up," said his father. "Go and help steer the boat or something. We prefer your room to your company."

The southern islands of the Cyclades, some near, some far, slid by on either side of the yacht and nothing but the two tall masts cut the blue of the Aegean sky. Around the coasts of Naxos, Amorgos, Astipalaia, and Milos creamed the

almost tideless sea, while between them and the lesser islands the waters were the colour of dark grape-hyacinths.

"Halcyon!" murmured Chloe Cowie, before she fell asleep in her deck-chair. Mary and Hero looked at her with different reasons for hatred.

After her first taste of the brew dished out by the Greek boatmen, Hero had undertaken to make the after-dinner coffee. Her method was simply to pour boiling water over the coffee grounds and leave the result to settle, but, on the whole, she was fairly successful. The yacht was amply supplied with crockery, and there were two sets of coffee cups, half-a-dozen in each. In one set the cups were of different colourings but of the same pattern. In the other set they also could be distinguished from one another, for they were figured with imitations of Greek vase-paintings, and at an early stage in the cruise each of the original passengers had made personal choice from these and guarded it jealously from the four who had joined the yacht at Delos.

Roger did not care for coffee, so had not chosen a cup, but he always handed theirs to the others, a duty insisted upon by his tutor. Having a quick eye and the advantage of a youthful and unspoiled memory, he had never made a mistake in carrying out his simple task. He knew that his father had a brown cup, Chloe an orange one, Edmund a dull green, and Mary had chosen blue—to match her eyes, said the spiteful Hero. Of the original yacht party, Dick's cup figured the Warrior Vase from Mycenae with its procession of long-nosed, spear-carrying foot-soldiers, Hero's had a geometric pattern but with a picture of a horse and a warrior round the rim, Simon's also carried a geometric design, but it had no picture and only an embryo key-pattern as its main feature, Julian's showed Odysseus blinding the Cyclops Polyphemus, and Dame Beatrice's cup had a pattern of Athenian revellers copied, so Dick informed



her, from a cup by the Brygos painter which she must go to Wurzburg to see. The giver of that pictured feast had ended up with a nasty hangover, he told her, and he pointed out the drunken figure of the host.

Determined to have what she called her séance, Hero collected the coffee-cups after dinner that night and handed each in turn to Julian. At this point Dick, Henry, and Edmund left the saloon to go on deck, Henry to smoke a cigar, Edmund to gamble with the younger Greek while the older Greek was at the helm and vice versa when the crew changed over, Dick to enjoy the peace of the luminous night, its phosphorescence and its myriad brilliant stars.

He was about to leave the rail and go below when Hero joined him. She stood beside him in silence for a few minutes and then said very quietly,

“Papa Ronald, is it your wish that I should marry Simon?”

“Really, my dear, I’ve never thought about it,” he replied, “but, since you ask me, I think you are too much alike and too much of an age. In any case—” he left the sentence significantly unfinished.

“I think I would rather marry Julian if he were not so poor. Do you think he will write novels and make as much money as Mrs. Cowie?” Hero went on.

“I have not the faintest idea how much money Mrs. Cowie makes,” said Dick, relieved by the change of subject.

“She is very wealthy. I think that is why Mr. Owen wants to marry her.”

“Oh, come, my dear! That is not a kind thing to say. Besides, Henry must have plenty of money. Look at that ring he has given her.”

“The truth is often not kind. Don’t you want to know the fate that was in your coffee cup?”

“You may tell me, if you wish, but you know I place no confidence in these childish predictions.”

“Your cup said you will be married in five months’ time.”

"Well, perhaps I had hoped to be, but there is no chance of it now."

"You mean you want to marry Mrs. Cowie?"

"I had thought of it, of course, but I did not think you knew. In any case, I have completely changed my mind."

"There was death in one of the cups."

"Oh, now, really, Hero! You must not talk such nonsense!"

"Julian told me. I asked him about it while Roger was doing the washing up, but he would not tell me who was going to die soon."

"Roger? He does not often offer his help—or was he pressed into service?"

"No, no, like a good, willing boy, he offered. How brilliant the stars are! Look at that constellation! Is it Orion, do you think?"

"I don't know one star from another, my dear," said Ronald Dick.

"No? One thing I tell you about stars. Those in Mrs. Cowie's ring, she pay nearly all for them herself."

"Oh, now, really, my dear! Anyway, what if she did?"

"Do you believe in reincarnation, Papa Ronald?" asked Hero, after a long silence.

"I have never thought about it, my dear."

"You don't know one constellation from another and you did not know about Mrs. Cowie's ring which Mr. Owen could not afford, and you have never thought about reincarnation? Mrs. Cowie believes in it. She was telling Mr. Owen this morning that she thinks she is the reincarnation of Sappho."

"Most unlikely, my dear."

Hero giggled.

"You are unsympathetic," she said. "Now you talk to me and tell me some good ideas you have."

"I have an idea—and it is not a comforting one—that we ought not to have avoided calling at Naxos. Mrs. Cowie seems most disappointed that I decided to leave it out."

"But we cannot go everywhere."

"She seems to be deeply impressed by the story of Ariadne, particularly her desertion on Naxos by Theseus. I received the impression that she connects it with some incident in her own life, but, of course, she is a romantic."

"She is like her silly, dreadful novels," said Hero, giggling again. "Papa Ronald, do you mind it very much that she is going to marry Mr. Owen?"

"Oh, no, not at all, my dear. My wish, of course, is for her happiness. Besides, I am not at all sure that she would have been the right wife for me. I had given up all thought of it, I assure you."

"She will not find life easy with those two boys."

"Oh, they're good fellows. They wouldn't make things difficult."

"Not Edmund, perhaps. I think Edmund has his own friends and, anyway, he is almost a man. But I am not so sure about Roger. He has a strange, secretive nature, I think, and also I believe he could be cruel."

"To another boy, perhaps, but he would have no way of being cruel to a grown woman, especially a woman of the world such as Chloe Cowie."

For some reason obscure to herself, Dame Beatrice felt that at Santorin the pilgrimage had its true beginning, although even on this startling volcanic island the party were together for only some of the time.

Donkeys were chartered for the women and Roger, mules for Dick, Henry Owen, Edmund, and Simonides, and on these much-enduring animals the company mounted broad white steps cut in the multi-coloured cliff and picked their way up the zig-zag ascent among the donkey-droppings until they reached the white-walled village at the top of the hill.

“Eight hundred steps,” said Roger, when they had alighted. “But, look! We could have walked up—easily!” On the further side of the island a gentle slope led downwards to the sea.

“Yes, but we could not bring the yacht to anchor except in the gulf,” said his father. “Well, now that we’re here, what is there to do? We seem to have passed the local junkyards on our way up.” He was referring to the devastation wrought by a fairly recent earthquake.

“I think our object, when we have admired the view, is to proceed to the ancient city, from which this one takes its name. We go by way of the monastery. From the port I believe we can take a taxi, but I’m afraid it means a rather tiring trek after that to reach the excavations,” said Ronald Dick.

“I do not wish to see the excavations,” said Simonides. “I am told that to take a boat to the Burnt Islands is the best thing to do from here. There are volcanic craters, still active, and much that is strange and interesting. Besides, one gets a better view of Santorin from the sea than from up here. It is a most impressive island, but one needs to see it in perspective.”

“Very well,” said Dick. “If you will organise your expedition, I will accept volunteers for mine. Which do you prefer, Dame Beatrice? And you, Mrs. Cowie? Henry? Mary?”

The company divided up unequally. Except for Dame Beatrice, Hero, and, strangely, Roger, everybody opted for the boat-trip, and it was agreed that the next meeting should be on board the yacht when all the sight-seeing was over.

The climb to ancient Thera, although it was taken on mule-back from the monastery terrace, was both long and arduous, and Dame Beatrice reflected that nothing but loyalty to the leader of the expedition had caused her to undertake it. Hero complained openly and Dick remained enduring and apologetic. Apart from the uncomfortable ride,

with the mules stumbling at times over deep ruts and potholes in the primitive roadway, the wind was exceptionally strong and blew furiously all the way from the monastery up to the excavated site.

Dame Beatrice loitered behind when the others went exploring. She sat down and had just made up her mind that she ought to move across to the temple of Apollo Karneios, protector of the island flocks, when she was joined by Roger, who approached her by leaping like a goat from step to step of the semi-circular auditorium, for she had chosen to seat herself in the excavated theatre.

"I say," he said, "pretty lousy here, isn't it? Wish I'd gone with the others to see the volcano things on those little islands."

"Well, you had to make your choice," said Dame Beatrice sympathetically, "and I thought at the time that you might have enjoyed the sea-trip better."

"So did I, but Edmund wouldn't let me go with them."

"Really? Why was that?"

"I don't know." He kicked the stone seating, a sign not of resentment, Dame Beatrice felt, but because he was keeping something to himself. He added, after a pause, "Still, I always do what he says."

"I was thinking of walking over to the temple. Do you care to accompany me?" Dame Beatrice enquired.

"No jolly fear! Oh, I don't mean to be rude, but I've already been there. I say, you know what a crank Mr. Dick is?"

"I have never regarded him in that light."

"Oh, haven't you? Well, he is! Do you know what Suffolk was telling me last night? He said that there were a lot of inscriptions on some walls here in memory of boys who used to dance at the festival time."

"A pleasant custom, surely?"

"Yes, but Suffolk said that Mr. Dick might want Simon and Edmund and me to do the same thing—in honour of the

god, you know. I expect he was pulling my leg, but, anyway, that's why Edmund wouldn't come."

"It is not the right time of year for that particular festival. The youths you speak of danced to commemorate the grape harvest which, in this island, was held to be the gift of the god. I think you will be perfectly safe."

The temple was built on rock and from the markings scratched on its threshold it was clear that it had indeed been a place of pilgrimage, but the worshippers appeared to have been of one mind in their dedicatory epigraphs.

"I should think they *would* scratch a picture of their feet if they had to climb up here," said Roger, when Dame Beatrice pointed out the pious markings. "I should think they jolly well felt the god *ought* to do them a bit of good after they'd sweated like that, wouldn't you? I should think their feet were killing them, and a sacrifice has to be killed."

"Well, have you had a good day?" said Henry Owen to Dame Beatrice when the whole party were together again on the yacht and dinner was still a couple of hours away.

"If that is not a rhetorical question," she replied, "I will say that, having visited the ancient sites on Santorin once, I feel that once is enough."

"Of course, the earthquake of fourteen or fifteen years ago did a lot of damage. You should have come with us. We had a great time, although if you've seen Solfatara you don't really want to bother much about the Burnt Isles, I suppose. Chloe didn't get particularly excited about them. She seems a bit off colour, as a matter of fact. I don't think the ride up the cliff steps this morning did her an awful lot of good. She seems to have developed a fit of nerves for some reason. She gets giddy if she looks down from a height, I believe, and she's very highly strung, or so she says. She thought that climb this morning was dangerous. I thought,

myself, that it was merely very uncomfortable. How did *you* regard it?"

"Philosophically."

"Ah, yes, I suppose that's the best way to look at things. By the way, I hope Roger behaved himself this afternoon."

"Had you any doubts about it?"

"Well, you know how it is with kids. He's only fourteen and boys of that age are apt to get into mischief when they're bored."

"He did not appear to be bored so much as apprehensive."

"Apprehensive? Roger?"

"He feared he might be asked to dance naked in front of the temple of Apollo, and, of course, he is about the right age and is certainly handsome enough," said Dame Beatrice solemnly. Before Henry could challenge the second of these statements Chloe Cowie came up to where they were standing at the rail.

"Oh," she said, "are you telling Dame Beatrice about my dreadful experience?"

"What dreadful experience, my dear?"

"Oh, really, Henry! When I was getting into the little boat and somebody lurched against me and deliberately tried to push me into the water!"

"Oh, that! I'd forgotten all about it. In any case, it was the merest accident."

"You only say that because you didn't see it happen."

"No, I went first, to give you a hand if you needed to be helped into the boat. Anyway, everything was all right, because the boatman steadied you."

"Yes, but he might not have got to me in time, and there was a *shark* in the water! I saw it!"

"Now, now, steady on! Even if you *had* gone in, you'd only have got a wetting and the sea is very warm at this time of year. We'd soon have fished you out with the

boathook." He laughed, throwing back his leonine head, a Viking of a man and aware of the fact.

"You're silly and heartless. What about the shark?" cried Chloe. "That wretched girl saw it and deliberately thrust me towards it."

"Oh, those which come as far inshore as that are females and are perfectly harmless. As harmless as Hero, whom you accuse of trying to push you in. The thing's absurd."

"Well, if *that's* your attitude . . .!" Chloe looked at him angrily, jerked her chin in the air, and walked away. Henry gave a short, vexed laugh.

"See what I mean about her nerves and all that?" he said. "*Of course* she wasn't pushed, and *of course* there wasn't a shark."

"I think there is no doubt she had a fright," said Dame Beatrice. "Is the yacht going to remain here until morning, do you suppose?"

"Until after lunch tomorrow, so Dick says. My own opinion is that we shall be lucky to get away then. You know what he is. Fanatical where his pet subject is concerned. They are digging out a Mycenaean palace which must have been buried at some time in ash and lava, as Pompeii and Herculaneum were, and he wants to go and take a look at what they're doing. Personally, I couldn't care less, and we've plenty in front of us without wasting another day here. He doesn't consider *my* point of view. After all, I've only come on this trip to add to my collection, and I've seen nothing worthwhile here. Why couldn't we have stopped off at Naxos and Amorgos? Here, I'll tell you what! Suppose we persuade him to stay ashore tonight so that he can have all day tomorrow to look at this dig? Then the rest of us could go to Amorgos—it isn't all that far—and I could look for specimens of *Muscari*. I know it grows there. Let's assemble the party in the saloon and see if Dick's willing to go it alone



tomorrow. Then we could cast off tonight, spend the day on Amorgos, and pick him up in the evening.”

Dick made no objection to the plan. In fact, he welcomed it, remarking that it would give the younger members of the party something to do. The father and son who formed the yacht's crew took him ashore in the yacht's tender and waited while he ascertained that the beautifully situated Hotel Atlantis could give him dinner, a room, and breakfast. The yacht then left her moorings and turned northwards to an island which had been among those which Dick, at first, had planned to visit but which he had subsequently left out of his itinerary.

The yacht was capable of ten to twelve knots in clement weather, and the evening and night were fine. On the following morning, as soon as it was light, Henry, his sons, Julian, Chloe, and Mary went ashore, Julian unwillingly in charge of Roger. Dame Beatrice, Hero, and Simonides made a late and leisurely breakfast and were content to admire, from the deck of the yacht, the mountain scenery and the great cliffs of orange limestone which rose so grandly from the eastern side of the island.

The botanical party got back early, for, to Henry's ill-concealed annoyance, Chloe had been tripped up (by Julian's carelessness, she alleged), had hurt her knee and her ankle, and insisted upon Henry's taking her back to the yacht in person. By the time this had been done and first-aid rendered, it was too late for him to go ashore again and the rest of the party had returned. Julian repeated his apologies for the accident and those were ignored. He, Henry, and Chloe were still ruffled when the yacht picked up Dick that evening, a state of things not improved by Hero, who was overheard to say to Simon that middle-aged women should not go scrambling on rocks with fanatical flower-gatherers and young men who were too spineless to refuse to accompany them.

The next part of the pilgrimage was to take place on the mainland, so the yacht put in at Nauplia for Epidauros. The company landed, and while Dick, Hero, and Simonides went in quest of the two cars which, by arrangement, were to pick up the party at the port, Julian, Roger, and Edmund mounted to the citadel. Dame Beatrice, Chloe, Henry, and Mary sat at a table on the quay, drank ouzo, and watched the cheerful and lively scene.

Whether the leisurely progress of the yacht from Santorin had given sufficient time to put Chloe back on her feet, or whether (as Dame Beatrice, who had insisted upon treating it, thought) it had received nothing more than a slight twist, Chloe's ankle seemed to give no trouble once they were ashore. They heard no more about it.

When the cars arrived, driven by Dick and Simon, there was an hour's delay while Julian, Roger, and Edmund returned from their jaunt and joined the party, and then it was decided to take lunch at the hotel and set off for Epidauros in the late afternoon.

Dame Beatrice had recollections of the first time she had visited the place sacred to Asclepius, when she had gone there in company with Sir Rudri Hopkinson and his disciples, and she was looking forward to seeing it again. It was too much to hope for serpents, those healing agents formerly sacred to the god, especially as it was not Asclepius this time who was the cult-object. They were there to honour the much earlier Apollo the Healer, whose sanctuary his son Asclepius in a sense had taken over, but, in her case, her main interest in the visit was to obtain another sight of the theatre. As the party was to stay at one of the two bungalow-hotels quite near to it, she would have the opportunity and all the time she wanted to admire and test the acoustics of the masterpiece.

Early in the morning which followed their arrival she was seated about three-quarters of the way up the auditorium when she was joined by Julian.

"Pretty good, isn't it?" he said. "I'd love to come to a play here. They use it, you know, quite a lot."

"Yes," said Dame Beatrice, "so I understand, but I have not been fortunate enough to be present on such an occasion. Do you speak Greek?"

"Well, Cambridge Greek, if you know what I mean. I can make myself understood in modern Greek, but it's differently accented, as well as having, well, a rather different vocabulary."

"It would oblige me very much if you would go down to the stage and declaim. It is said that even from the topmost tier one has no difficulty in hearing what is said."

"Oh, all right," said Julian, nothing loth. He descended to the furthest edge of the circular space at the foot of the tiers of stone benches and waved his hand to indicate that he was ready to begin. He had a pleasant, cultivated voice and his enunciation was good. He spoke—or, rather, recited—for several minutes, and then climbed up to where Dame Beatrice was seated and sat beside her.

"That was Cambridge Greek," he said, modestly hoping for her praise.

"Yes," she agreed. "It was part of the great speech in *The Frogs* where the Chorus gives the city 'good counsel and instruction.'"

"You could hear all right, then?"

"Every syllable. I congratulate you, both on your mode of speech and on your memory."

"Oh, well, I was one of the understudies for the Greek play in my third year, and we did the Aristophanes. I never got the chance to play one of the parts—they only do the Greek play every three years, as you probably know—but by attending all the rehearsals I got most of the stuff by heart. I'm fortunate in having a particularly good verbal memory. I say, I wonder if I could talk to you about something."

"By 'something' you mean Miss Hero Metoulides, no doubt."

"Oh!" said Julian. "Well, yes. We had a row when we were on the ship and, although I think things went all right again, today she avoids me. She thinks I ought to put my foot down about being made to tag along with those boys, but what can I do? After all, it's my job, and I've dodged the column too often. She must know how I feel about her, but she hasn't made up her mind whether she feels the same about me. If only that chap Simon wasn't about all the time, I think it might be different, but, because he's a member of their household and yet no actual relation of hers, I've got him in my hair. I was wondering whether you'd advise me what to do. My trouble is, you see, that although I've heaps of potential, I haven't really got going yet, and that means I haven't any money. If only she weren't an heiress I'd charge ahead regardless of everything, including this *thing* she's probably got about Simon, but there's still a prejudice about proposing to a wealthy girl when you haven't a bean of your own."

"Oh, in these days, when so many professional women earn more than their husbands, I don't think it matters much which of you has the money. It is much better for the wife to be rich than for neither of you to be well-off, don't you think?" said Dame Beatrice. "Besides, you say you have a future, and your assets are brains, charm, and determination, I'm sure. In any case, Simonides is too young for Hero, I think, and I'm certain she knows it. For other reasons at which I can hazard a guess, I do not believe that Mr. Dick would sanction the match."

"Well, thank you. You've certainly cheered me up," said Julian.

"A small return for the pleasure of hearing you addressing the Athenian citizens in such splendid fashion and in words which are as apt at the present day as ever they were in 405 B.C.," Dame Beatrice assured him.

As though she were an oracle, or perhaps because she was the only spiritual descendant of Asclepius there

present, the next person to climb the steps of the theatre to invoke her aid was Ronald Dick.

"How did they manage these wonderful acoustics?" she asked. "And in the open air, too. Julian has just been reciting to me from down there."

"It is thought that the builders sank great jars with their mouths acting as baffle plates," he replied, "but I know nothing about the way sounds carry or what happens to them after they are made." He seated himself beside her, as Julian had done. "Beatrice, I have a problem."

Dame Beatrice realised that to him it must be a serious one. He had never before used her Christian name without a prefix.

"I thought everything was going splendidly," she said.

"I know, I know. It's nothing to do with the expedition. I have no worries now on that score."

She waited, realising that he was trying to choose his words. Dick stared westwards towards the remains of the temple to Asclepius. Next to it were the remains of the hospital dormitory, the mysterious *tholos* where perhaps the healing serpents had been kept, and the remains (conjectural) of a hostel for pilgrims north of the temple and its adjuncts. When he spoke again it was abruptly and the content of his speech would have been sufficiently startling if Dame Beatrice had not already guessed the truth.

"Hero and Simonides seem to have no idea that they are sister and brother," he said.

"Indeed?"

"You are not surprised? You had not guessed, had you?"

"Well, perhaps I had begun to wonder about it. To me they are much alike, and their coincident birthdays indicate that they must be twins. I have noticed that they entertain a good deal of natural affection for one another, and no doubt you are beginning to fear that this is turning to what is known (erroneously, I think) as *unnatural* affection. Is that your problem?"

"I thought—I had always supposed, in spite of some of the legends which one associates with the Greeks—that persons of the same blood had an instinct in these matters. Until I happened to see Hero and Simonides together the other evening, I had no idea that their love for one another might be carnal."

"A crude expression, surely?"

"I am not adept at expressing myself in words. The point is that they were locked in a close embrace and were kissing one another in what I can only describe as an abandoned fashion. This morning Simon asked me for Hero's hand in marriage."

"That was very dutiful of him. What did you say?"

"I'm afraid my courage failed me. I postponed saying what will have to be said sooner or later. I said there were reasons for with-holding my consent, and that I would discuss the matter later. How am I going to break it to him? He is an impulsive boy and very ardent. I dread to think of it, but he may have deflowered her already. Greece has much to answer for!"

"Knowing what I do about Hero—little enough, I grant you, but I am a trained observer—I think your fears are groundless. She has the modern Greek concept, I am sure, of maidenly virtue, lively though she may seem." She thought of Roger, sleeping on deck during the cruise, and of Mrs. Dearwater's disclosures, and began to wonder.

"You relieve my mind. All the same, I shall have to tell them," said Dick. "Now is it best to have them both together when I do so, or would it be wiser and kinder to talk to them separately?"

"Are you asking for my advice?"

"If you will be so good."

"I think you had better speak to Simon and leave Hero to me."

"Oh, Beatrice, that is really terribly good of you, although mine, I fancy, may be the more trying interview."

Fortunately Hero has some regard, I believe, for young Mr. Suffolk, and I do not think there is any doubt about his feeling for her."

"I also am in no doubt about that," said Dame Beatrice.

"I like young Suffolk and he would be a steady influence on Hero, who may appear more adult than Simon, but who has inherited not only her Greek father's volatile characteristics but something of her mother's selfishness," Dick went on.

"Ah, yes. Who *was* her mother?" Dame Beatrice innocently enquired. Dick gave her a very peculiar look.

"Perhaps the less said about that the better, if you will forgive me for keeping you in the dark," he said. "It is a subject which, for me, has a painful connotation."

"I understand. It is fascinating how wheels, from their very nature, tend to come full cycle. And Mrs. Cowie, I gather, is to some extent involved, but it does not seem to me that your children—if I may call them that—are aware of it."

"Actually, as you have guessed, she is related to them, but she does not know it, either, and I trust that you will not mention it to her. I am not sure that she would find the connection an agreeable one. I know you won't press me for details."

"I am no mathematician," said Dame Beatrice, "but I know when two and two make four." She gave him her disquieting saurian smile. "I do not need any details."

Her next visitor was Chloe Cowie. She seated herself with a tired or perhaps a discontented sigh.

"What is the difference," she demanded, "between a man and a botanist?"

"A botanist can be of either sex."

"Oh, I don't mean that! Henry wants to climb rocks, and his only interest in going to Delphi is to find specimens of

horehound and various spurges and tulips and orchids. I'm devoted to flowers, naturally, but I don't want to scramble about to find them. He has been fretting, too, in the most boring and unnecessary way, because we did not visit more of the Cyclades, and he was quite unkind when that clumsy young man hurt me so much the other day and I had to be helped back to the yacht. Then you yourself know in what a cavalier way he spoke to me when I was almost thrown overboard by that dangerous Greek girl and might have been attacked by a shark. I am beginning to wonder what my married life is to be. A man who thinks more of his obscure and revolting plants than he does of his wife is going to make a very inconsiderate husband. As for Ronald Dick, well, I could have an easy conquest there, but how could I dare to live in the same house as Hero?"

"Later on," said Dame Beatrice, "you may be very glad to have married a man who has an overriding hobby. Think how your work would suffer if he expected you to be always at his disposal. I refer, of course, to Mr. Owen."

"But that's just what he *does* expect," complained Chloe. "He can't understand it that I don't like scrambling about and spraining my ankles and getting stuck on dangerous ledges. Oh, Dame Beatrice, do you think I've made a mistake in accepting him? I begin to believe I have."

"Well, if you think so, there is still time to rectify matters, is there not?"

"But what reason could I give? Besides, apart from this monomania of his, I find him extremely attractive. He is such a glorious brute of a man, so different from poor Ronald Dick who, as I say, certainly would make me an offer if I were free."

"You would be little better off, I fear. Mr. Dick is also a monomaniac. Would you wish to spend your married life living on archaeological sites and assembling potsherds?"

"But, of course, there are those two growing boys," said Chloe, ignoring the question, "and, on Ronald's side, not



only Hero but Simonides.” She sighed again, sepulchrally this time, and added, “I wish I knew what to do. I’ve a very good mind to go home.”

---

\* Margaret L. Woods—*Genius Loci*.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### **Calliope, the Muse of Epic Poetry**

“ . . . Pan, the rustical god . . . embracing and teaching the mountain goddess Echo to tune her songs and pipes, by whom were feeding the young and tender goats . . . ”

From Argos the way went due south to Lerna and then in a series of bends on a mountain road to Tripolis, where the party spent the night. On the following morning the two cars left the main road at Megalopolis for a secondary thoroughfare which took the pilgrims through Karytena to Andritsena where again they put up for the night. From the hotel they went twice to Bassae.

Here, in the morning, the party broke up into companionable groups. Henry Owen and his sons climbed and scrambled on the rocky mountainside, Henry in search of wild flowers, the boys for exercise. Julian and Hero once more appropriated one another while Simonides good-naturedly escorted Chloe (who had firmly refused to climb rocks) and Dick partnered Mary. Dame Beatrice allotted to herself the role of the cat who walked by himself for, as time went on, she found that she had little in common with some members of the expedition and enjoyed her own company better than theirs. They, for their part, felt that she now knew too much about them to make her a comfortable companion, although that was not her fault.

When she looked back on the tour much later on, she realised that only when they reached Bassae had there appeared to be no real hindrance to anyone's immediate pleasure, and on their first visit to the temple of Apollo this was true. On that radiant morning it seemed to her as though, in that rare atmosphere, on that awe-inspiring mountain, petty ills and frets could have no power and would lack any kind of significance. The total absorption of the lovers in one another made Ronald Dick's former anxiety about Hero and Simon appear unnecessary and even slightly ridiculous; Chloe made no complaint of fears and suffered no minor accidents; Simon was gay and charming and she appeared to enjoy his company, and even Mary, with Dick, but looking wistfully after Hero and Julian as they climbed hand in hand towards the temple, was at least out of earshot of her aunt. Perhaps best of all, no ventriloquist practised his previously mischievous art or indulged his out-of-place sense of humour. All was peace on the broken, majestic mountain, as though Apollo himself had lingered to bless these visitors to his shrine.

The temple was beautifully sited nearly four thousand feet up Kotylian Mountain and was dedicated to the god in his title of Epicourios, for its cella was a shrine of healing. Dame Beatrice remembered having seen parts of the temple frieze in the British Museum. There was a representation of Theseus fighting with the Amazons and another of a battle between Lapiths and centaurs, but there was pity as well as terror depicted, tenderness as well as brutality—an Amazon pleading for her enemy, the wounded being carried from the field.

The building (except for the Hephaisteion in Athens) was the best preserved in Greece. It was very long for its width and not only was its Doric peristyle remarkably complete, but two rows of engraved Ionic and two separate Corinthian columns still remained standing within its cella,

in whose bays sick pilgrims had slept in the hope that the god would grant them the blessing of a cure.

Dame Beatrice still wandered alone, preferring solitude and her own thoughts and impressions to conversation and discussion. She spoke to nobody but an elderly goatherd wearing the countryman's pleated kilt, who greeted her with patriarchal courtesy before, with his horned flock, he picked his way, staff in hand, among the broken stones of the hillside amid the tinkling of the goatbells which, day after day, for him was the only sound which broke the solemn peace of the wild Arcadian mountain.

In the late afternoon, at Dick's insistence, the party, except for Henry Owen and Edmund, returned to Bassae to watch the sunset. It spilled shadows of rose and purple on granite rocks and pinnacles and threw the temple, which faced north-south, into stark and awe-inspiring grandeur, so that it seemed to exist as part of the mountains themselves, dominating its setting and defying nature with its insistence upon the god-given genius of man.

It was after the return to the hotel that the first major crisis which led to the final disintegration of the pilgrimage was triggered off by Mary. It began, in the most innocent way imaginable, with a remark she made as they were leaving the cars preparatory to going up to their rooms to change for dinner, which they were to take at half-past nine.

"The temple was built as a thank-offering for deliverance from the plague," she observed.

"So we are told," said her aunt, with condescending amiability. "What of it? Does it matter for what reason it was built, so long as it *was* built and so long as we were able to go and look at it?"

"It is believed that Iktinos, the architect of the Parthenon, built it," said Dick. "Until 1959 there was no passable road to it. The mountain used to be the haunt of brigands and in 1766 a French architect who had happened upon the temple site when he was exploring the countryside

on holiday the previous year and had decided to return to it, was murdered by a band of them.”

“Why are brigands, pirates, and highwaymen always presented to us as colourful and romantic characters?” asked Hero. “As for the temple, I wish it were still inaccessible. It is too strange and too frightening to be visited.”

“You did not seem to find it so when you went to it with Julian,” said Mary. “Personally, I consider it awe-inspiring and grand, and I think . . .”

“I wonder whether the sick pilgrims were really cured?” said Chloe, interrupting her. “If so, they were luckier than I. I’m sure I got a mosquito bite this evening. It is the time of day the wretched insects like best.”

“Oh, you always make such fuss about your bites! Why can’t you allow us to conduct an intelligent conversation for once? Who wants to talk about mosquitoes when we’ve just had such a glorious experience?” demanded Mary, with irritable boldness.

“Really, Mary!” said Chloe, obviously taken aback by this outburst. “That is a most uncouth manner in which to address me. I think you forget yourself, don’t you? And I do *not* make a fuss. Insect bites can turn poisonous and you know how sensitive I am to them.”

“It was I who got those terrible bites last summer when you would insist that we followed that stream until we walked into a swamp,” said Mary, in a quieter tone.

“Julian,” said Hero, “do you dare to come back to the temple with me after dinner?”

“Good Lord, no,” said Julian. “Don’t be a fathead. Do you want us both to break our necks on the rubble?”

“Oh, I thought we might ask the god to favour us, but, if you are afraid, we will not go.”

“I shouldn’t, if I were you,” said Mary, loitering near them. “The god might say it with thunderbolts. If you want

to visit the temple again, Hero, you should go at dawn. Let me know, and I will come with you."

Hero laughed.

"I like only to go with Julian and at night," she said, "to have audience with the spirit of the place. I *felt* something there which I could not explain. Everyone talks of Delphi and the Oracle, but I think the voice of Apollo is to be heard most clearly at Bassae. I think he tells me to go with Julian to church later on, too."

"Incidentally," said Edmund, who had come out on to the porch when he heard the cars drive up, "it was Zeus who threw down thunderbolts, Mary. Apollo's weapon was the bow."

"Oh, get out of my way," said Mary, pushing past him into the hotel. Edmund looked at Hero and raised his eyebrows.

"What's the matter with *her*?" he asked.

"She's not in the mood to put up with being corrected," said Julian. "She's already bitten Mrs. Cowie, so I should look out, if I were you."

"Girl bites lioness? Surely not!" Edmund looked incredulous.

"I think she must be feeling the heat," said Hero, "or perhaps she is tired. She told the good aunt not to make a fuss about mosquito bites."

"Somebody must have been feeding her meat."

The three young people went into the hotel. After dinner, at which Mary was almost feverishly gay, her aunt took her aside.

"Stop making a fool of yourself over that young man," she said fiercely. "He is not interested in you and you are embarrassing him."

"Oh, I am, am I?" said Mary. "I'll thank you to mind your own business!" She turned sharply away, tripped over a rug, and fell flat. Henry Owen, who had followed Chloe out of the dining-room, picked the girl up off the floor.

"Steady, the Buffs," he said genially. Mary struck him in the face and tore to her room.

"Well!" said Henry, with a hand to his smarting cheek.

"I'll go after her," said Chloe, "and make her come down and apologise. I am quite at a loss to account for her behaviour today. If *this* is what foreign travel does for her, she had better have remained at home." She stalked off in the direction her niece had taken.

"I don't want Mary to apologise, unless she does it of her own accord," said Henry. "Dame Beatrice, you witnessed the incident. What did you make of it?" He turned to where she had seated herself in the lounge and dropped into a chair beside her.

"I made nothing of it," she returned composedly. "Girls become overwrought at times. It is wiser and very much kinder to leave them to themselves. Mary will soon realise that she has overstepped the bounds of civilised usage and will then approach you on her own account, I am sure. I rather hope that she has locked her door against Mrs. Cowie."

Dick, who had lingered in the dining-room for a word with the head-waiter to whom he had endeared himself because of his fluency in modern Greek, now joined them. Edmund had gone off with his brother, Julian with Hero. Simonides, who had picked up a very pretty Swedish girl who was staying in the hotel, had also left the lounge.

"Did I see Mary fall over?" asked Dick. "I hope she did not hurt herself."

"She hurt *me*," said Henry, touching a still-reddened cheek.

"Really? I thought I heard the sound of a smack. What an extraordinary thing for her to have done! Did you offend her in any way?"

"I only picked her up off the floor."

"Perhaps," said Dick, eyeing the botanist's Viking frame, "she resented your masculine strength."

"Perhaps she wished I had been young Suffolk," said Henry. "She certainly was in a rare taking, and has been, all the evening."

"Oh, Hero gets these moods, too," said Dick. "I always lie low until they pass over. It's really the only thing to do."

"That's all very well," said Henry, "but you can't compare the two girls. Hero is Greek . . ."

"Half Greek."

"Well, I would say it's the better half, then. When she throws a temperament I don't suppose it matters a hoot. Just all gas and gaiters. Mary seems to me a different kind of girl entirely. Hero might stick a knife in you if her feelings ran away with her, but I can imagine Mary quite enjoying watching you die of slow poison. I wouldn't have her as a member of my household for anything you could offer me. If I marry Chloe, Mary will have to go."

"Oh, she is gentle and harmless enough, I'm sure."

"So is a rattle-snake until it's roused, and something *has* roused that girl. I'm certain of it. She's usually as meek as a sheep. I've never known her turn on Chloe like that."

Chloe, who had been attempting vainly to persuade, or, rather, to order Mary to open her bedroom door, now returned to the lounge.

"I can do nothing with her," she said shortly. "I believe the wretched child has gone mad."

"Well, I insist you leave her alone to get over it," said Henry. "I'm not fond of the girl, but I will not have her bullied."

The others, Chloe most of all, looked at him in surprise.

"Oh, very well, dear man of mine," she said. "I confess to being somewhat in awe of you when you look and speak like that. I daresay the child is simply over-excited by all that she is experiencing. It shall be exactly as you wish, although I must protest just a little at your choice of words. I have never bullied anybody in my life."



"All right," said Henry, laughing. "We'll all do our best to believe you."

On the following morning, immediately after breakfast (which the company had fallen into the habit of making a communal meal although it was a light one) Dick called a meeting, saying that he had something to discuss which would affect every member of the party.

"So," he said, "I want to canvass the views of everybody before coming to a final decision. The point is that we have been singularly fortunate in our travelling, so much so that our schedule is now not nearly as tight as I feared it would have to be. This means that we can fit in a little more than I would have dared to hope. Well, now, Delphi and then Athens are on my list, but we seem to have at least a couple or even three days to spare, so I wondered whether any of you might care to make a suggestion as to where you would like to spend them."

"Would these days be fitted in between Delphi and Athens?" asked Mary. "I mean, must we go to Delphi first?" Her mood had changed. She was the church mouse once more.

"Not necessarily. It would depend upon where you would all like to go," Dick replied. "Have you any preference?"

"Mycenae, Eleusis, Tiryns, and we really saw nothing of Argos as we came through," said Julian, not waiting for Mary's reply.

"I would like that," said Hero. "Yes, that is what we must do."

"Should we have time to get back to the yacht and go to Rhodes?" asked Roger. "I'm browned off with all these ruins. I want to see the fortifications and the Street of the Knights and all that."

"Rhodes for me, too," said Edmund.

"Yes, indeed," agreed their father. "There are some excellent specimens of plants on Rhodes, but it would take

longer than the time we have to spare. I think we will put it off until this party breaks up, and then the three of us and Julian will go there. We'll charter a boat, if necessary, although I expect the local steamers will be adequate. Rhodes is a first-class place for what I want to collect. The fennels, for example, particularly *chiliantha* . . ."

"Do you mean you'll be staying on in Greece after the others have gone back home, then, sir?" asked Julian, obviously so aghast at this arrangement that he dared to interrupt his employer in the middle of a sentence. Henry Owen looked surprised.

"Isn't that what I've just been saying?" he asked. "My only fear is that we may be too late to see it in bloom. *Ferula chiliantha* is in full flower—delightful orange-gold inflorescences—in April on Rhodes, and it grows to giant height. According to A. J. Huxley, it may be monocarpic and die off after flowering. Perhaps I can find that out. Then, on Rhodes, I also expect to find . . ."

"But look here, sir," said Julian, desperately risking another interruption, "we—those of us who came by sea—Roger and myself, for example—have our return passage booked on the cruise ship."

"Oh, yes, so you have," said Henry. "Oh, well, you'd better take up your reservations." As Roger began a bitter protest he added, "I expect the ship calls at Malta. That's just as good as Rhodes for what Roger wants. Crusaders!" he concluded. "Knights of St. John! A lot of immoral hooligans, I call them, but I suppose a boy has romantic feelings of admiration towards them. Anyway, Edmund and I will stay on and go to Rhodes. Oh, and Chloe, I suppose."

"Not Rhodes, Henry dear," said Chloe Cowie, twisting her engagement ring. "I shall have *far* too much to do when we get back, preparing for our wedding, to have any time to spare to go to Rhodes."

"Nobody really thought you would go to Rhodes, my dear girl," said Henry, obviously relieved. "For one thing,

you know you hate scrambling about. Besides, there's plenty of time to get married, but it would be a sin and a shame for me to be so near such a wonderful place for specimens and not to spend a week or two collecting them. I may never have such an excellent chance again."

"Why not, dear man? Why should you not?" Chloe spoke gently, but there was a steely look in her expressive eye.

"Shan't be able to afford it, with a wife to keep and Julian's salary to pay, and these two enormous chaps of mine eating their heads off and growing out of their clothes and shoes as fast as they put them on."

"But, Henry, the royalties on my books . . ."

"Surely you're not going on with your *writing* after we're married, my dear girl?" asked Henry, in blank astonishment.

"I wondered whether any of you would care to go to Olympia," said Dick, who had begun to look distressed.

"Beatrice, you haven't spoken yet. Haven't you some preference, perhaps?"

It seemed to Dame Beatrice that it might be just as well if she expressed one, before the argument between Chloe and Henry became acrimonious.

"Olympia would be delightful," she said. "I would plump for Mycenae, Tiryns, and Argos, also Eleusis, except that I know them well, so for me Olympia would be something new."

"I feel the same," said Simon. "Will any of you vote for Olympia?"

"My own choice," said Chloe, abandoning any attempt to argue further with her fiancé in public, "would be the island of Leukas. I should like to see Sappho's Leap. It sounds so thrilling and romantic. She was killed there, you know. Whether she intended a spectacular suicide, or whether she was attempting to emulate—"

"Devil of a way from here," said Edmund, who had a map open on his knee, "and nothing much to see when you get there. If we're putting off Rhodes until after Athens, I

vote we go straight to Delphi, which is a 'must,' I suppose, for Mr. Dick, because of all this Apollo stuff, and then I should like to spend the extra days in Athens itself. There's some life there. I tried their lagers—Fix Hellas and Alfa—and they're really quite good. Then there's Hymettos honey for breakfast—oh, boy! Besides, we ought to make time for some shopping . . ." he glanced at his father and winked—"wedding presents and so forth, eh? Where's the point of visiting any more ruins?"

"We shall be spending three full days in Athens as it is," said Dick. "Shouldn't that be sufficient, don't you think? Perhaps . . ." he looked round the circle with timid hopefulness . . . "we could put it to the vote."

"I'll tell you what, Chloe," said Henry Owen, brushing aside this suggestion, "I'll make a bargain with you. I'll go along with this Leukas thing of yours if you'll reciprocate by giving up any unreasonable objections to Edmund and myself staying on and going to Rhodes. You can't go to Leukas on your own, and nobody else is opting for such a tomfool excursion, so there it is, take it or leave it. What do you say. Is it a deal?"

"I am not going back to England without you, Henry." Having announced this, she closed her lips and looked straight in front of her.

"But, damn it, you came *out* from England without me! You sailed and I flew. Remember?" said Henry, unimpressed by her attitude.

"But at that time, Henry, we were not engaged to be married," said Chloe, weakening.

"Take it or leave it, my dear."

"Anyone else for Leukas?" demanded Edmund.

"I don't mind," said his brother, "if it means I can go to Rhodes with you and Dad."

"You can't," said his father. "I'd forgotten I'd paid your fare and Suffolk's. No, you two will pick up the ship. Our air

passage isn't booked, but your cruise is, and I'm not wasting all that money."

"Papa Ronald," said Hero, "if Julian should be required to go to Rhodes . . ."

"But Henry has just said he is not, my dear."

"Tell you what," said Edmund, "how would it be if Hero and Suffolk went with you, father, and I took Roger home on the ship? The ticket would do for me just as well as for Suffolk, wouldn't it? And Hero would be no end useful in Rhodes, speaking the language and that kind of thing, you know."

"Who said I would be willing to go to Rhodes? I do not like aeroplanes. I shall go back *on* the ship, *with* Julian," said Hero, stretching her nostrils and addressing Edmund with her eyes flashing dangerously. "How dare you order my life for me, you rude, silly, little boy!"

"I thought you'd like to go to Rhodes," said Edmund.

"Who are you calling a little boy?" He stepped across to her, put his large hands at her waist and lifted her bodily into the air. Hero's mood changed at once. She squealed delightedly.

"Oh! Oh! You are a giant! You are a centaur! You are a big, strong man! Oh, that you were older! I think I would be in love with you!" She drummed with her fists on the top of his head. Julian, with a brow of thunder, rose from his chair. Dame Beatrice watched interestedly. Chloe said sharply,

"Really! This vulgar horseplay! Put her down at once, Edmund! Have you no sense of decency?"

"Well, she shouldn't wear frocks that ruckle up," said Edmund, restoring Hero by putting her into Julian's arms. "Here you are, Suffolk. She's all yours."

"It's more than time a little discipline was instilled into you, young man," said Chloe.

"Well, you've almost qualified yourself for the job," said Edmund, "haven't you?" He settled himself in his chair and returned to a study of his map, totally ignoring Chloe's furious eyes.

"Well, we don't appear to have decided anything," said Dick. "Will somebody make a proposal?"

"Hero has almost made one—and to me," said Edmund, looking up. "Really these 'almosts' are becoming rather commonplace. Let somebody commit himself, for goodness' sake. Mrs. Cowie is *almost* my stepmother and Hero is *almost* my wife. I dislike this sitting on the fence." Julian strode over to him and aimed a furious punch at his face. Edmund, accustomed to beery bouts of rough-housing at public houses after Rugby football matches, easily avoided the blow and, as it passed by the side of his head, he gave Julian a friendly but heavy thump in the ribs. "And now," he said, grinning, as Julian lost his equilibrium, "Suffolk has *almost* struck his employer's son."

Julian, recovering his balance, turned and walked out of the room.

"You will apologise to Suffolk," said Henry.

"Certainly you will," said Chloe, sharply.

"Julian does not take a joke, for which I am very sorry," said Hero. "What would you have done, Simon, in Julian's place?"

"Stuck a knife in Edmund, and then I should have wept for him, because of his untimely death," said Simonides.

"Well there's *still* nothing settled, thanks to Edmund's idiotic and unmannerly behaviour," said Chloe, in the same sharp tone. "Some want this, others want that, and a third set wants something else. Surely, as reasonable beings, we can stop wasting all this time and come to a conclusion."

"I have come to one," said Simon. "Nobody is a child. We can all take ourselves here and there without difficulty. I think all should do as they wish. Mycenae for Julian and Hero, Olympia for Dame Beatrice and my father, Leukas for Mrs. Cowie and Mr. Owen . . ."

"Also for Mary," said Chloe, without altering her former tone.

"Ah, yes, Mary," said Simonides. "She must go to chaperone the happy couple, of course."

"I'm going to Olympia with—with Dame Beatrice," said Mary, with almost hysterical emphasis.

"And I suppose Edmund and Roger will have to come with us, too," said Chloe, completely ignoring Mary's outburst. She smiled at the brothers, but without goodwill. "I suppose I had better accustom myself to having them under my feet."

Their father laughed. The brothers exchanged glances, then both rose and bowed to Chloe.

"Charmed, madame," said Edmund.

"I have spread my dreams under your feet," said Roger.

"Well, I hope they won't trip her up," said Mary balefully, hoping for the reverse.

"Edmund," said Roger, "we have an ally. The United States Marines are at hand."

"You're three very silly, ill-natured little children," said Chloe, her colour rising.

"Yes, you'd all much better be quiet," said Henry.

"Father denies us the right of free speech," said Edmund, "and I thought it was one of the fundamentals. Ah, well, we must make the most of what we have."

"And what is that, pray?" enquired Chloe.

"The right to go with him to Rhodes," said Roger.

"That has been settled, so you can be quiet," said his father.

"You know, with all respect, Mr. Owen," said Simon, suddenly breaking in before Roger could protest again about Rhodes, "my soul is prompting me to make a small suggestion. The excursion to Rhodes is controversial, I think."

"No, it is not. A bargain has been struck, has it not, Henry?" Chloe twisted her engagement ring as though the action would act as a signal to her betrothed.

"Ah, but hear me out, dear Mrs. Cowie." Simon gave her his most disarming smile. "The only reason Mr. Owen wishes to visit Rhodes is to enlarge his collection of wild flowers. Am I right, Mr. Owen?"

"Perfectly right," Henry agreed, but in a very suspicious voice.

"Very good. Well, now, you all go to Leukas, yes?"

"Sappho . . ." began Chloe.

"Ah, yes, you are her *revenant*."

"A pretty substantial *revenant*!" said Henry, laughing again and finding his amusement aided and abetted by his sons, who joined in it with impolite enthusiasm. Chloe's colour heightened again. Simonides scowled at Edmund.

"I am saying, as my soul prompts me," he went on, "that Rhodes is not the only island where wild flowers grow. When you are on Leukas, you will be within easy reach of the beautiful island of Corfu . . ."

"So we shall!" said Edmund, referring to his map. "What about it, Dad? With three days to spare before we go to Athens, wouldn't Corfu be the answer?"

"I think that's an excellent idea," said Chloe. "So much better than the bargain we struck regarding Rhodes. It means we can all go home together, as we had arranged at the beginning. Now, Henry, wouldn't that be quite the best solution? I think it will solve all the problems."

"Be even better if we could cut out Delphi," said Edmund. "I believe there's quite a lot of fun to be had on Corfu. It's a first-class holiday place. I could bear to spend an extra day or two there."

"Oh, no," said Chloe. "We can't miss Delphi. And, Ronald dear, wouldn't it be nice if you came to Leukas with us!"

"Leukas? Oh, *no*!" said Dick in a horrified tone which greatly interested one of his hearers. "Not Leukas for *me*!"

"Besides, at Delphi I expect to find one or more of the *Cerinth*es," said Henry, ignoring Dick and Chloe. "I am most



anxious to add *retorta* to my collection. Then there are the wild tulips, particularly *bocotica*, a most beautiful and striking thing. I only hope it will not be past flowering by the time we get there."

"At Delphi," said Mary, in a dead tone of voice, "it may be possible to consult the Oracle. I wouldn't mind knowing what the future holds for me when my aunt marries."

"We will all consult the Oracle," said Roger. "I hadn't thought of that!" The brothers, this time, avoided one another's eyes, but each was secretly smiling.

"Oh, dear! More ventriloquism?" said Dame Beatrice, with a startling cackle of mirth.

"Ventriloquism?" exclaimed Chloe. "Surely nobody would think of desecrating the shrine of Apollo by pretending to imitate the Pytho!"

"Oh, wouldn't they, though?" said Henry, his laughter ringing out once more. "I should call it a pretty good jape, if anybody could pull it off! Just think of the fun you could have!"

"Really, Henry! You are as irresponsible as Edmund and Roger," said Chloe, declining to join in his laughter.

"Tell you what," he said, finding himself alone with her later, "that was a very peculiar outburst of Mary's after we left that temple at Bassae, and that hasn't been the only one. Is she often taken like that?"

"She has always been a discontented, moody girl, but I have never known her to behave badly in public. I was deeply ashamed of her, and have given her a piece of my mind. When she first came to me she wanted me to make her an allowance and let her go her own way. I refused, of course. She has no conception of what it means to be independent and to make her own living. Any allowance I could make her would be quite insufficient for her needs, and she has been trained for nothing."

"I thought she typed your books for you."

“Only under constant supervision. She would never hold down a job in an office. Besides, I could not allow her to live alone. Heaven knows what kind of trouble she might get herself into.”

“Well, I should have thought, all the same . . .”

“Nonsense!” said Chloe. “I should have to pay a secretary if I didn’t have Mary. To make her independent of me is out of the question.”

“We shall have to see about that,” said Henry firmly. “I’m only marrying one of you, you know.”

## CHAPTER SIX

### **Euterpe, the Muse of Lyric Poetry**

“When I was a young man I went to a certain city . . . to see the games and triumphs there called Olympian . . .”

On the following morning the “state of the parties” as the disgruntled Julian expressed it, was finally settled. There were to be two expeditions only. In addition to Henry, Chloe, Mary, Edmund, and Roger, Julian (as tutor and bear-leader to the two boys) had been ordered, on pain of losing his job, to accompany the botanical party to Leukas and Corfu. The order came from Chloe, who announced that she did not intend the boys’ father’s attention to be distracted, especially on Leukas.

Not only Julian but Hero received this fiat with ill-grace. She roundly upbraided the tutor for giving in to such an imposition—for so she saw Julian’s instructions. She appealed passionately to Dame Beatrice and Dick to get the decision reversed, but they pointed out that they had no power to question it, since Julian, presumably, had been brought on the tour solely in order to keep an eye on his pupils.

For his part, Julian, stung by her reproaches and sufficiently disappointed on his own account, told her in sullen tones that he needed a job, particularly since he wanted to marry.

"Marry?" said Hero. "You mean marry *me*?"

"Of course. Don't be silly. You've promised. What about that crack to Mary about going with me to church?"

"I did not promise to marry a coward, a nothing-man, a servile!"

"Servile is an adjective, not a noun. Why can't you learn to speak English?"

The second party, Dame Beatrice, Dick, Hero, and Simonides, decided (guided thereto by Hero) to go to Corinth and from there to Delphi, where the larger party would join them.

"Although I would not be at all surprised," Dick told Dame Beatrice, "if we did not see them again until we reach Athens."

"You think the botanist in Mr. Owen will take precedence of the archaeologist? I should not be surprised, either," she agreed.

At Andritsena, therefore, as soon as breakfast was over, the parties separated. Henry Owen's went in the larger of the two cars to take the mountain road which joined the coast road to Pyrgos and the little town of Kyllini. This, according to Edmund's map, was a calling-place for ferry-boats to the island of Zante. This being so, Henry was optimistic about the chances of being able to hire a boat to take his party thence northward to Leukas, and from Leukas he foresaw no difficulty about obtaining transport, still northwards, to Corfu.

"Far more sensible to keep on the coast road to Patras. We'd be sure to get a steamer from there," said Edmund.

"It might not call at Leukas, and, of all things, I want to see Sappho's Leap," said Chloe. They were still arguing when the others waved them goodbye.

"Well," said Dick, two mornings later, "we seem a very happy, quiet little party without the others. I am very glad

we are able to spend another day or two here. The mountain scenery is superb. Besides, now I am able to visit the temple at Bassae without the distractions of last time." He took Dame Beatrice aside. "I am afraid Hero may do something rash about Simon now that she and Suffolk have quarrelled," he said. "The awkward part of it is that she does not seem at all put out about it. Do you not think this is a good time to break the news to her? I do not want her to rebound—is that the term?—on to Simon, and I fear that that is what will happen. I never *did* think that her attachment to young Julian was all that strong."

"You may well be right." She glanced over to where the twins were standing with their arms around one another's waists. They were looking silently at the magnificent view.

"I suppose you are still willing to do me that great favour you promised?"

"And break the news to Hero? Yes, of course."

"Then I will tackle Simon. I should like to get it over before we meet the others again."

Dame Beatrice cast a benign eye upon the handsome Greek children.

"They are obviously very fond of one another," she said, "as one imagines twins naturally would be. For the rest, I doubt whether you need feel any anxiety. All the same, I will do as you wish." The twins, who had turned about, came up to them.

"And now, Papa Ronald," said Hero, "we are one happy family, and Dame Beatrice shall be our mother."

"Grandmother," said Dame Beatrice. "Are we all ready to depart?"

"I will bring the car round," said Simonides. "Corinth! What a charming city! Full, I think, of riches!"

"In the time of the Persian Wars," said Dick, "it contributed nothing but the prayers of its courtesans for an Athenian victory."

Simonides shouted with laughter, his thin, aquiline face falling into the mirthful creases of a faun or a young satyr. Hero linked an arm in that of Dame Beatrice.

"I am not yet sufficiently packed," she said. "Come with me while I put in my last effects, and weep with me because the lid does not shut down. Also I weep because I have said harsh words to Julian. These days without him I am lonely."

"He deserved your words," said Simonides, "but if I had been in his place . . ."

"Ah, but you could not be. You are my little brother and for you I have much adoration, but you are not yet a man. A Greek woman," she went on, turning to Dame Beatrice, "must in all things be subservient to her husband. That is a woman's nature, and so God intended it to be." They walked arm-in-arm towards her bedroom. "But how could I be subservient to Simon?" Hero went on. "We are of one age, which means that he is five years younger than myself in all his outlook."

"You call him your brother?" said Dame Beatrice.

"My *little* brother."

"Do you speak with the knowledge which is said to be power, I wonder?"

"Please?"

"Has it ever occurred to you that you and he are indeed consanguinous?"

Hero squeezed the thin arm which held hers.

"I have wondered," she said, unemotionally. "You see, it would be so strange in Papa Ronald otherwise. You mean we are twins, Simon and I?"

"That is what Mr. Dick wanted you to know."

"Well, that disposes of all doubts. Now I can love Simonides as much as ever I like. We have often spoken of it, you know."

"The fact that you might be related?"

"Of course. Both orphans, both of twenty years on the same birthday. It seemed so likely, do you not think?"

"Do you remember your childhood?"

"Oh, yes, but not with Simonides. I had a Greek foster-mother, in England part of the time, then she married again, like I have told you, and we went to Greece and then Papa Ronald found me and I became his ward. I am not related to him, I think."

"No. He was a family friend, I believe."

"He was in love with my mother?"

"I have no reason to think so."

"No, he would be too old, I think. I will find out later, but now I sit on this stupid luggage and make him shut."

"Unnecessary." Dame Beatrice took charge of the recalcitrant suitcase and fastened it.

"Does Simon know?" asked Hero, ringing the bell to have the suitcase carried out to the car. "About being twins?"

"Mr. Dick will tell him."

"That is good. I think Simon is a little in love with me, but he is like mercury, all little balls that roll around and around and are liquid, not solid, and so can separate and then be all together again. They look like silver, but are heavier, much heavier, than lead. I think he is of the old Greeks and his soul, that he so loves to talk about—he is Platonist, you understand—is a soul, not from Plato, but from Zeus himself. Zeus had many loves—you will know the old stories, many very beautiful, like Danae, like Leda, even like Europa—and nobody except Hera—very jealous, very possessive was that one—see how she treat poor Leto, mother of Artemis and Apollo—cares anything at all about it. So, if Simon take many lovers, what of it? Nobody shall care, least of all Papa Ronald, because he does not know. As for me, I could never have been his lover, anyway, because I am jealous and must be the only one. Besides, he is *much* too young."

She sat beside Simon in the front seat of the car and they waited for Dick, who was paying the hotel bill. When he

appeared he was wearing an expression of almost childlike mischief. He put his head in at the driver's window and said, his eyes twinkling behind his glasses,

"Not the road to Tripolis just yet. Now that we have rid ourselves of the others, we will go first to Olympia and then, if you wish, to Corinth."

"Ah!" said Hero. "You did not wish to see Olympia in company with Mrs. Cowie. How right of you, dear Papa Ronald, because Olympia is almost on their route, but Mr. Owen will not stop there now, because you are not with them to make him look at the ruins."

"I particularly did not wish for the company of Henry's boys," said Dick, "although I am sorry that Mary Cowie will miss Olympia."

"If it would affect her in the same way as after she went to Bassae, perhaps it is as well for her to miss it," said Simon.

"Papa," said Hero, "I have something to say to Simon. He is glum. I will cheer him up. To him what he hears from you is bad news, I think, but I say to him like this: now we are sister and brother, I do not repulse you any more, so that you may kiss me and hold me in your arms as brothers and sisters should do, and I will not be afraid to fondle you and make much of you, for to you now I am a maiden, a nun, a priestess of Apollo, a temple virgin, pure, sexless, tabu, united with you by the sacred tie of blood, but not by the love of men to women. There! Is that not beautifully stated?"

Simonides received the oration with a brief expletive in Greek. Dick observed, in his precise and scholarly voice, as he joined Dame Beatrice on the back seat of the car.

"The temple virgins, my dear Hero, were not appointed until they were at least fifty years of age, so I fear that at present you would not qualify."

What Hero's magniloquent speech had failed to do, this laconic statement accomplished. Simon exploded into happy



laughter as he drove erratically and very fast, considering the narrowness of the road, in the direction of Pyrgos, where Dick directed him to turn sharply off for Plantanos and Olympia. It would have been possible to take the road to the west from Andritsena and then, by turning north, to pick up the eastward-running major road through Lagkadia to Olympia, but this would have spoiled Dick's simple pleasure in his little ruse, and, apart from that, the route he had chosen was one which he had never travelled before.

The party booked in at an hotel which was adjacent to the museum and which overlooked the ruins. These lay scattered over a wide area and were dominated by the temple of Zeus. Except that legend stated that he had been an Olympic winner in the Games, there was nothing to connect Apollo with the site except for a sculptured pediment in the museum which depicted him attempting to intervene in a battle between the Lapiths and some drunken centaurs.

It was the setting, and not the broken columns of temples, the arched passage leading to the stadium, the two remaining pillars dedicated to Hera or the portico of the gymnasium which attracted Dame Beatrice. After the awe-inspiring mountain scenery around Bassae, the surroundings of Olympia had a true Olympian calm. The German archaeologists who had done so much and so imaginatively to preserve and reconstruct the Altis sanctuary had planted a grove of trees and the sanctuary itself was bounded by two rivers. The countryside was pleasantly undulating, peaceful, pastoral, fitted, in its benignity and calm, to be the scene of the Games where, every fourth year, weapons, feuds, and warring factions were forgotten, and Greek met Greek not bearing suspect gifts but in comradeship and brotherhood and in bloodless combat and fair competition for the honour of taking home to a rejoicing city nothing more notable in the way of spoil than a crown of wild olive.

She watched while Hero and Simonides bathed in the shallow, soft and milky waters of Alpheios, for at that time of year the stream still sweetly ran in its gravel bed, and then she settled herself beneath the northern pines the northern archaeologists had planted, and took her siesta under their kindly, dark, green shade.

When she woke she found Hero seated beside her.

"You know," said the girl, "you and I should not be here. It was forbidden to women."

"A woman did manage once to ignore or circumvent the ban, though," said Dame Beatrice, "or so I believe I have read."

"Ah, but she was the mother of a winner at the Games, so says one story, and she was the priestess of Demeter Chamyne, says another. The first story tells that she came disguised as a man, her son's trainer, the other that she came as her right as an official. Do you think I could ever disguise myself as a man? I think not."

"I agree, but you could, perhaps, become the mother of an Olympic champion."

"With Julian as his father? I am worried about Julian. I think I make a mistake there. Should I marry him, do you think? Please advise me."

"I cannot give advice on such a matter except to say that it is better to be quite sure before you marry."

"I like him, but I do not admire him."

"Very few women admire their husbands, I believe."

"A Greek must respect her husband, even if she does not admire him. That is most necessary. I do not even respect Julian. It is a tragedy."

"Well, at least it supplies you with your answer."

"What a pity Edmund is not older."

"Edmund, I fear, is an oaf. I say it in the kindest spirit and with no implied criticism, but the fact remains. I should be sorry for any gentle, sensitive woman who married him, unless he alters a great deal as he grows older."

"Would you call me gentle and sensitive?"

"No. I should call you bold, beautiful, and ruthless."

"Like Clytemnestra?"

"Very possibly, although I cannot imagine that you would allow yourself to be married by force . . ."

"Or that I would kill my husband with an axe?"

They both laughed, and then Dame Beatrice said,

"Before Zeus became the patron of the Games, the site was dedicated to Hera. I think I will pay my respects to her temple before I leave this spot."

"It is only two Doric columns and some broken stone steps."

"It is set among deciduous trees and more of these agreeable pines, and is dedicated to a goddess and so commands our sisterly regard."

"And tomorrow we go to Corinth, which I have never seen."

"You seek always some new thing?"

Instead of answering, Hero suddenly exclaimed.

"Look! Look over there! Is it not Mary Cowie?"

"Indeed it is, and alone."

"Something must have happened. They must have changed their minds," said Hero, in an excited voice. She left Dame Beatrice and caught up with Mary. "Well!" she said. "What are you doing here? Where are the others?"

Mary stared at her stupidly. She was obviously completely taken aback by the encounter.

"I thought you'd gone to Corinth," she said weakly. "I certainly didn't expect to find you here. You said you were going to Corinth. Why haven't you gone?"

"We are on our way."

"But this isn't on your way. I thought you were going by way of Tripolis."

"We thought it would be more interesting by way of Pyrgos and the coast. But what are *you* doing at Olympia? Are the others with you? I do not see them."

"You mean you don't see Julian, I suppose," said Mary, rallying.

"Well, except for Mr. Owen, he is the tallest of the party, so he would be easy to pick out, I suppose," said Hero, good-humouredly, "but you have not answered my question."

"Why should I? It's no business of yours where the others are. If you want to know, they are having to hang about at Patras because they can't get a boat for a couple of days, so I thought I might just as well see Olympia while I had the chance, that's all."

"Yes, I see. I think that was very sensible of you."

Dame Beatrice joined them.

"Well," she said to Mary, "how nice to see you again. But are you alone?"

"Oh, yes," said Mary. "As I've just explained to Hero, we found we had to wait two days at Patras for a boat, so I hired a car and came on here. I suppose I'd better be getting back before my aunt begins to panic."

"She does not know you have come?"

"No. I'm supposed to be doing some shopping for her."

"Dear me! I am afraid she will think the shopping is taking rather a long time. Have you had any lunch?"

"Oh, yes, of course. I had it in Pyrgos. Well, it has been fun meeting you. I certainly didn't expect it."

"Mary thought we would be in Corinth," explained Hero.

"Of course she did. You know," said Dame Beatrice, leering kindly at Mary, who was obviously very ill-at-ease, "I really think it would be better if you stayed at the hotel here for the night. You can telephone your aunt to let her know what is happening, and then return to Patras early tomorrow morning."

"No, I must get back. My aunt will be quite sufficiently put out, as it is, to think that I've taken the initiative for once, and acted without her permission or knowledge."

Besides, I've told my driver to wait for me and take me back to Patras."

"Have you seen all you wish to see, or have you just arrived?"

"Oh, I've seen enough. I'm sick and tired of ruins."

"Then why," asked Hero, innocent-eyed and speaking softly, "did you travel through the heat of the day to visit Olympia?"

"Simply because, if you come to Greece, it's one of the places you're supposed to have visited," replied Mary.

"Anyway, it's beautifully peaceful here, and the temple of Zeus makes a change from all these shrines of Apollo."

"Have you visited the museum?"

"No. I don't care about museums. I'm always being sent to the Victoria and Albert to make notes on things for my aunt's horrible books. She likes to 'get the atmosphere right,' as she calls it."

"A very worthy aim," said Dame Beatrice. Mary pulled a face and was turning away when Hero, who appeared to be in a mischievous if not a malicious mood, observed:

"If you admire the temple of Zeus, you must on no account fail to visit the museum, whether you like to visit museums or not."

"Why?" asked Mary, suspiciously. Hero waved a beautiful brown hand.

"The temple pediments are there," she said. "It is not far to go. You get to it by crossing the Kladeos. Quite simple. You will enjoy the drunken fight and the chariot race, and you will see Apollo at his best and noblest. Then you will be able to tell your aunt that you have only been carrying out Papa Ronald's wishes, and she will forgive you and perhaps make you another little present of money. Who knows? Such strange things happen in Greece. That you should spend on a *taxi* the money she gave you for her shopping!" Hero concluded.

During this speech Mary's face had turned dark red and then white, first with fury and then with what Dame Beatrice diagnosed as fear. Realising what was likely to happen, she flicked out a thin arm and with powerful yellow fingers gripped Mary's wrist.

"No," she said. "That will not prevent Hero from displaying unkindness and ill manners."

"If she strikes me like she did Mr. Owen," said Hero, in an unemotional tone but with blazing eyes, "I kill her."

"If she had struck you, you would well have deserved the blow," said Dame Beatrice, "but these primitive reactions serve no useful purpose. And now, my dear Mary, let me accompany you to your car and speed you on your way." She released the wrist she had been holding and gave Mary a kindly little pat on the shoulder. "You had better wait for me here," she said to Hero. "I shall have something to say to you later."

"You are making me afraid," said Hero, with simple accuracy. "I do not like to be scolded."

"Well," said Dame Beatrice, returning to her after what seemed a long interval, "I agree with you that strange things happen in Greece."

"You are not going to scold me?"

"I never scold people. If they are sensitive, their own sensibilities tell them that they have shown themselves not at their best. If they are not sensitive, then scolding is more likely to make them obstinate than ashamed."

"You are a very wise woman, I think. But did you not agree with what I said, however badly and unkindly I express myself?"

"I could tell what you were thinking, and, of course, the same thought had crossed my own mind."

"The tiger-aunt *cannot* have been in Patras when Mary escaped. She would never have sent her shopping all by herself, and given her all that money. Besides, Mary was very much afraid. What do you think has happened?"

“Well, we have to allow for the fact, perhaps, that Mrs. Cowie and Mr. Owen are engaged to be married. They may sometimes prefer to be alone together and that, to some extent, would leave Mary free.”

“That is not the impression I have. The tiger-aunt insists on a chaperone. Perhaps she thinks Mary is an inexperienced young girl! What an idea, that!”

“Now you are being unkind again,” said Dame Beatrice mildly. “Your pointed remark about money, however, reached a very sensitive spot. What made you think of saying what you did?”

“You know what made me say it. A taxi all the way from Patras and back again, and the driver to wait for her while she studies the ruins of which she is sick and tired? There is a big mystery here, and I like, above all things, big mysteries.”

“Well, I suggest that you do not involve yourself in this one. It is, after all, no business of ours if Mary chooses to ride about the Peloponnese in taxi-cabs.”

Hero giggled, her equanimity completely restored.

“Well, it is no business of ours, as you say,” she agreed, “but me, I shall continue to think about it. I cannot at present understand the circumstances. All is so strange, like I say. Think, now, of what we know, and then reconcile it with Mary’s visit here. And she, how she was so much surprised to find us here. She was not only surprised, did you think? She was not pleased. She was not pleased at all. Her plans, whatever they were, we put them wrong. We should have been at Corinth. She had counted upon that. And then to find us at Olympia, it was a great shock, as anybody could tell. So I ask myself why it should be a shock of the unpleasant kind, and not a surprise of the delightful kind, to find us here. Me she does not like, of course, but of you she can have nothing but the kindest thoughts, because you are so sympathetic towards her.”

Dame Beatrice thought of Mrs. Solomon's rubies, and was less sure than Hero seemed to be of Mary's kindest thoughts.

"Naturally it gave the poor child a shock to find us here when she thought we had gone to Corinth," she said. "There would be nothing more in it than that."

"Very well, then," said Hero. "Nevertheless, I am greatly exercised in my mind about this Mary. She is never—but *never*—allowed to please herself in what she does. For her to travel alone, to hire a car, to cause the others to hang about and wait while she indulges herself to see a place they do not wish to see, it is incredible. Has she asserted herself some more, as she did at Bassae? Has she told the tiger-aunt of her right to a life of her own? Has she persuaded Julian to take her side, or has that uncouth Edmund, perhaps, encouraged her to defy the tiger-aunt again? Has she, like Apollo, killed the Pytho?"

"Beware how you speak such words, even in jest," said Dame Beatrice. "I agree, though, that the event is without precedent, so far as we know, except, as you say, for that significant outburst at Bassae—or, rather, at Andritsena."

"Then there is the money of which I spoke unkindly to her. I repeat to you: it is not cheap to hire a car from Patras to Olympia. Does she receive such money from her aunt? I think not. I think she is given a little pocket-money, perhaps, and a fee for the hairdresser—something like that—but otherwise, if I am to judge, the purse-strings with Mrs. Cowie are very tight."

Dame Beatrice had nothing to say to this, knowing, as she did, that Mary was not above helping herself to what was not her own if the circumstances seemed to be favourable and the risk appeared to be slight. There was another aspect of the matter which puzzled her, however. The botanists had had three days' start of her own party. It was difficult to believe that they were still at Patras. Even if Henry Owen had agreed to sail from there instead of from



Kyllini, he would be anxious to get to Leukas to satisfy Chloe, and even more anxious to reach Corfu on his own account.

"This Corinth is dull," pronounced Hero two days later, when, to please Dick, the party had visited the temple of Apollo there. "Why do we stay any longer?"

"Well," said Dick, "now that we have seen the temple there is nothing to keep us here and we could put in the extra time at Delphi. The ferry plies from Rion which is almost at the end of an excellent road which runs from here back to Patras. It is only about eighty miles, I believe. We could do it easily tomorrow morning if we make an early start. I don't think it is a car ferry, though, so we may have to return by the same route and go to Athens by way of the Isthmus."

"As we have time to spare, and there is a doubt whether there is a car ferry—in fact, I am inclined to think that the passage you mention is by local steamer—is there any good reason why we should not cross the Isthmus straight away and go to Delphi by way of Megara, Thivai, and Levadia?" Dame Beatrice mildly enquired.

"A far better idea," said Simonides, "and will save a great deal of trouble. But, first, I think Hero and I take the small journey to Xylokastron, where there is a beach. Will you come, Dame Beatrice, with my father?"

So early in the year the beach was not crowded. From the hotel, one of the only two which were actually on the sea front, Dame Beatrice and Dick watched the scene while, in the clear, warm water of the almost tideless bay, the twin children of Leto splashed and laughed and swam.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### **Polymnia, the Muse of Divine Hymns**

“From the first foundation of this city, we have had a custom to celebrate the festival day of the god . . .”

“Thus when they had spoken . . . they took cups of gold and sang hymns to the god . . . and laid them down to sleep.”

“Mary Cowie came to Olympia!” exclaimed Dick, later, when Dame Beatrice had made her next remark in continuation of their conversation while they watched the swimming. “But how could she have got there? I’ve been wondering about that ever since Hero first told me that you and she had met her.”

“I was puzzled about that myself. I still am at a loss to explain it. I know she came in a hired car, but that is all.”

“And she actually spoke to you?”

“Also to Hero, as you know, so, you see, there was no mistake about it. We could not both have imagined it.”

“No, no, of course not! But what can have happened? Has Henry changed his plan of going to Corfu?”

“It did not sound like it. Mary was anxious to return to Patras and not to keep the rest of the party waiting for her there.”

“But they could have got to Patras half-a-dozen times since they left us! Something must have delayed them. I

wonder what it was?”

“Mary made mention of some delay in hiring a boat.”

“Oh, well, speculation is idle. We shall hear all about their adventures later on, no doubt. There is one thing about it: we certainly need not expect to meet them at Delphi. There will only be time for them to drive directly to Athens if they are to stay on schedule.”

Early in the morning the car took the main road through quiet Megara and just before reaching Eleusis branched off for Thivai. The battlefield of Plataea lay to the left, but the party did not stop, and at Thivai, the ancient Thebes, they followed the road north-west to Livadia, situated below Mount Helicon. They approached Parnassos. The mountain road proceeded in a series of hairpin bends and on the edge of ravines. The fields, if such they could be called, and the perilous verges of the road, were bounded by drystone walls. Apart from the ubiquitous goats and their herdsman, there was not a soul to be seen. Occasionally Simon would stop at wayside springs to cool the engine or to give his passengers a chance to cool themselves in the shade of trees.

The road crossed the upper ravine of the Platania and began to climb the principal mountain range. It followed the pattern laid by the conformation of the indented precipices. Parnassos dominated the scene, until, from the col of Arakhova, over three thousand feet up, the winding road, rounding a succession of rocky spurs, at last revealed the modern village, and in the distance a speck of white indicated the situation of the Delphi museum.

From this point, high above the village, the views were magnificent and Dame Beatrice could understand why, apart from its ancient sacred associations, Dick had left Delphi until the last. The road descended in a series of hairpin bends which, one after another, opened up a changing panorama. There was still snow on the high tops, but, as the car crept onwards down the mountain, there

were vineyards on the steep and sun-drenched slopes, and there were groves of olive trees so thickly planted and so numerous that they formed, with their strangely contorted trunks and Arthur Rackham-like gnarled and writhing branches, a witchcraft forest about the banks of a waterless stream.

There were terraced fields on the lower slopes of the hills, poor, rocky and small, but the almond trees were in leaf, their virgin blossoms long dispersed on the winds of the Grecian spring, and, nearer the village, some cheerful peasants, walking beside or ahead of their laden donkeys, greeted the travellers with smiles and a salutation of friendly, waving, brown hands.

The hotel was air-conditioned and it overlooked, from its cliff-top eyrie, the gorge of the River Pleistos and the outspread plain below. Eyrie was the operative word, for the mountainside was the haunt of eagles and buzzards. Nearby, to the south, was the Gulf of Itea and beyond it could be seen the distant mountains of the Peloponnese. Behind the village, which was called Castri, rose Parnassos, and dropping from a high plateau on the awesome mountainside were the great cliffs of the Phaedriades, named (almost in Celtic fashion and reminiscent of the host of the Sidh) the Shining Ones, a name to inspire a supernatural terror. Not for nothing, thought Dame Beatrice, raptly gazing upon this place of grandeur, earthquakes, and beauty, had Apollo in Asia been designated Lord of Tigers.

"He was the destroyer, as well as the protector," said Hero, joining her and appearing to read her thoughts. "However, when we have been with Papa Ronald to the sanctuary tomorrow, I think I do not shop in the village, although I had hoped to do so. Here are nothing but thick woollen rugs and tasteless patterns on bags and, of course, always the picture postcards. When I shop, I shall shop in Athens. How pleased I shall be when we go there again. And you? How do you feel?"

"I observe that there is no sign of the other party," said Dame Beatrice, avoiding the question in which she felt no particular interest, "Perhaps they will join us tomorrow, although I believe Mr. Dick does not expect them."

"So much nicer without those boys and Mrs. Cowie," said Hero. "And for Mr. Owen I do not care so much, either. He is a brigand, do you not think? I wonder whether that stupid little Mary arrived with them again? I do not mind either way, except that it will be a great nuisance if she has run away from her aunt, but I think I would like Julian to be here, although I cannot believe that the bread earned by slave labour can taste as good as other bread. Julian is slave to those nasty little boys and Mr. Owen is a taskmaster, although not, I think, a severe one. You see I change back my mind about Julian, but perhaps I alter it again."

In the morning they paid their first visit to the ruins. The climbing was steep and arduous and although Simon (who wanted to spend as much time in Athens as possible) pointed out that the exploration of the ruins could be accomplished in one day, Dick had wisely allotted two. The weather was already extremely hot, even at that high altitude. The sky was cloudless and the landscape reflected that strange, indescribable light which belongs to Greece and is unmatched elsewhere.

Past tombs hollowed out of the mountain rock, past the Castalian spring, up to the Roman wall which enclosed the Sanctuary, climbed the pilgrims.

"Although," said Dick, as he and Dame Beatrice followed the S-bends of the zig-zag Sacred Way, past the bases of vanished statues and the remains of unidentified buildings, to the small, beautiful, carefully restored Doric temple called the Treasury of the Athenians, "we have not bathed, as pilgrims did in the past, in Kastalia's waters, or offered a cake or a sacrificial victim to the god, I think we will risk entering what was the cella of the great temple, when we get to it, and imagine that we are seating

ourselves in the adyton, seekers after knowledge from the tripod over the cleft."

"And what," she enquired, "shall we ask of the Oracle when we get there?"

"If the enquiry did not turn out to be a frivolous one," said Dick, "I would like to know how Mary contrived to slip away from the rest of her party—particularly from the vigilance of Chloe—and get to Olympia by herself."

"Yes, speculation about that is interesting. I confess that I myself have given it some thought. Perhaps, for once, Mrs. Cowie was glad to be rid of the girl for a bit, although, judging from her usual predatory attitude towards Mary, I find that difficult to credit. I had speech with Mrs. Cowie one day when we were still on board the cruise ship, and she made it very clear that she intends to keep Mary in her service as secretary and companion as long as the girl is useful to her."

"The poor child is in a difficult and unenviable position, I am afraid," said Dick. "She confided to me—oh, some time ago, when first I made her acquaintance—that she has been trained for nothing except for having received lessons in touch-typing paid for rather grudgingly by her aunt. She was brought up in a country vicarage and acted as her parents' housekeeper. Her mother, it seems, was an invalid. I suppose one ought to take the charitable view and say that it was goodhearted of Mrs. Cowie to give the girl a home when she lost her parents and they left her nothing—"

"I am not at all sure that Mary thinks so," said Dame Beatrice. "She longs for independence. I had proof of that on board ship."

"She asked me whether I had need of a private secretary," said Dick, "but I was obliged to tell her that such of my work as I decide to publish is amply catered for. Besides—" he smiled—"I can hardly imagine Hero and Mary living together in the same house."

“No, indeed,” said Dame Beatrice, with her saurian smile, “particularly as their circumstances and standing in your ménage would be so very different, apart from the fact that their temperaments are so unlike.”

“I had a suspicion—well, more than a suspicion, but, of course, I did not dream of carrying the matter further—that one day last summer, when we formed a party to picnic and bathe—Chloe has a beach hut at Canford Cliffs—Mary picked my pocket,” said Dick. “She was the only person who would have had the opportunity to abstract the money from my wallet. The wallet was replaced in the inside pocket of my jacket, but, except for a solitary pound note, all the money had disappeared.”

“Really?” said Dame Beatrice. “But had you anything to go on in suspecting Mary of the theft?”

“Unfortunately I had. I had been coerced into buying a raffle ticket for some local enterprise. It was a flimsy scrap of paper, and it floated out of Mary’s handbag when she pulled out her handkerchief. I had put it in the ticket-pocket of my wallet, so it is difficult to see how it had come into her possession unless she had had access to the wallet itself.”

“Interesting,” said Dame Beatrice. She was unwilling to recount the story of the attempted theft of Mrs. Solomon’s rubies, but was inclined to exchange, in a small way, confidence for confidence, in view of the nature of the conversation. “I had my suspicions in a little matter which occurred on board ship, but fortunately all ended happily and Mary was not finally involved.”

“I’m glad of that,” said Dick sincerely. “The poor child must be subject to great temptation when those about her have so much and she has next to nothing. Of course, she may be better off in many ways if Henry marries Chloe. Some prospects may then come her way. I do hope so. She is a nice enough girl, although she seems rather colourless at times.”

"One could hardly have called her colourless at Andritsena. She loses a great deal, of course, by contrast with Hero. I wonder how she will get on with Edmund and Roger when the marriage takes place?"

"I am glad those boys are not here." He offered Dame Beatrice his arm, and they walked on towards the remains of the great temple of Apollo. It had been carefully restored, so far as this was possible, but only the peristyle and the podium were complete, although some of the Doric columns were in their original position. They stood and studied the ruins. Ronald Dick took off his hat. In automatic response to this, Dame Beatrice made a slight genuflexion, much as she would have done out of politeness in a church. Dick replaced his panama and observed:

"I wish I thought that this trip had been more of a success. I am wondering whether it is my own fault as leader of the party that we seem to have had so much disharmony, or whether the company was ill-chosen. Of course, I had not realised that someone—and he can only be one of Henry's sons—would be possessed of the art of ventriloquism. I cannot help feeling that that is where the mischief began. Then, of course, there have been, to put it as tactfully as possible, other inconveniences."

They were standing on the terrace of the temple. Dame Beatrice looked down upon the widely-scattered ruins of the sanctuary and shook her head.

"Whether Mr. Suffolk, Edmund, or Roger is an adept in the art of ventriloquism, he would be sadly out-of-place here," she remarked.

"Whichever of the *three*?" asked Dick, puzzled.

"One cannot exclude Julian Suffolk, I think."

"But he is a serious-minded young man."

"He may have retained a boyish sense of humour."

They spent the afternoon in the museum, and in the early evening Dame Beatrice looked out from the hotel balcony over a scene of grandeur, isolation, and mystery



and thought of earthquakes, divinations, myths, and the bronze Charioteer, perfectly on balance, straight-legged, close-footed, long-gowned, watchful, austere, his right hand loosely holding the vanished reins, his chariot, his raison d'être, gone from under him and nothing left to show what once he was except a bent right arm, a turned wrist, and a parted finger and thumb. She had seen him in the museum and had wondered at his almost divine austerity.

On the following morning, which happened to be Sunday, Hero announced her intention of going to church.

"For all these days," she said, "last Sunday also, I worship this Apollo of yours, Papa Ronald. Now I make proper observances. Do you wish to come with me?"

"No," Dick replied, "but Dame Beatrice may like to have a change. You had better go to Itea and then hire a caique for Galaxidion. I take it that Simon is going with you."

"Oh, yes. It is necessary for him also to attend church. How far is Galaxidion from Itea?"

"Just across to another arm of the bay," said Simon. "Does Dame Beatrice desire to accompany us?"

Dame Beatrice said she thought she would like it very much. This was partly true and partly in answer to a pleading glance from Dick, who obviously wanted her to go. She suspected that he still had doubts about the advisability of trusting his ward and his adopted son alone together for the whole of a summer day. Apart from that, however, she thought that a day by the sea, even on the Bay of Itea, would make a welcome change from the somewhat arid atmosphere of the pilgrimage, and she also thought that Dick would enjoy a solitary day at Delphi.

Soon after breakfast, therefore, the three set out in the car for Itea, not many miles to the south-west. It was easy enough to hire a caique with its attendant boatman, and while Hero and Simonides attended the thirteenth-century Byzantine Church of the Saviour at Galaxidion, Dame

Beatrice strolled about the port and then sat in an open-air café for mid-morning refreshment.

"This afternoon," said Hero, when the three met again, "we go to Amphissa and through the gorge and pass of Gravia as far as Brallos. At Amphissa Simon says there is a ruined Frankish castle. Me, I am weary of ruins, but at least this will be a change from temples of Apollo. The gorge and the pass are good for scenery, I think, and at Brallos there is nothing, so we come back to Livadhia and so to Delphi."

"It sounds a long journey for a hot afternoon," said Dame Beatrice.

"Too far, you think? Maybe I think so, too, so we go only to look at the Frankish castle and then back, like good, dutiful children—" she laughed and looked challengingly at her twin brother—"to dear Papa Ronald, no?"

"Very well," agreed Simonides. "It was your idea we should make that journey, not mine. I am still wondering what made Mary go to Olympia. She is not so pleased to look at ruins, and, even if she is, she goes nowhere except with Mrs. Cowie."

"Perhaps Mrs. Cowie has been looking for wild flowers with Mr. Owen," said Hero, "and Mary slips away. If so, much trouble when she gets back, I think. She ought to marry Julian, except that then their children would be afraid of their own shadows, having such cowardly parents. Even so, she would be free from Mrs. Cowie, and that is what she wants."

"You are too hard on Julian," said Simon. "Every man must serve his master if he is to earn his wages. My soul tells me this, and it is true. All the same, I hope you will continue to think that you do not want to marry him. He might do for Mary, but he is not good enough for you."

"The wisest thing Mary could do would be first to kill Mrs. Cowie—without pain to her, if possible, of course—and then to marry Julian as soon as the lawyers let her have Mrs. Cowie's money," said Hero. "I have thought it all out and

unquestionably that would be the best and the simplest way."

"And after that, Mary and Julian would be happy ever after?" Simon smiled incredulously.

"Well, Mary would be. Those who have the insensitivity to commit murder would be insensitive enough to be happy ever after, I think. What do you say, Dame Beatrice, you who have known so many murderers?"

Dame Beatrice thought over such murderers as, either in her role as psychiatrist or in her capacity as unpaid private detective, she had been acquainted with, and replied,

"So few of them have remained acquaintances of mine, once their crime was brought home to them, that it is difficult to predict what their state of mind may have been. It is suggested to me by your conversation that you regard your commitment to Mr. Suffolk as being at an end. Would that be so, I wonder?"

"Oh, yes," said Simonides, "of course it is at an end. Hero and I are going to charter an island in the Hesperides, and there, without a doubt, we shall be happy ever after."

"Papa Ronald will not like that," said Hero. "The island, I mean."

"Papa Ronald will be 'beyond the shores of Styx and Acheron' by the time we get around to it," said Simon, "if ever we do."

On the following morning the party of four returned to Athens by way of Livadhia and Thivai.

"We traverse a road peculiarly sacred to the Muses," said Dick. "To begin with, as you may know, they were but three. Their chief haunt was Mount Helicon, beneath whose range we are passing. The Three are thought to have represented the strings of the lyre, and their names were Melete, Mneme, and Aoide, and they were connected with springs of water. They also had power over a sacred plant, one of whose properties was to render snakes harmless.

They were, from early times, associated with Apollo, but later Zeus decreed that their number should be nine. Thalia, broad and buxom (as I see her), carried a shepherd's crook, for her role was the inspirer of bucolic comedy and from her derives, no doubt, the slapstick humour of our own time."

"Custard pies," said Hero, without turning her head. She was seated, as usual, beside Simon on the front seat of the car.

"Terpsichore," went on Dick, "held a *kithera*, as became the Muse of the dance. Erato does not appear to have troubled herself with a personal symbol . . ."

"It might have got in her way. One needs the use of all one's body to make love," said Simonides. "Well, you should know," said Hero. "You and your many Athenian girls!" She giggled appreciatively.

". . . but Urania held a globe depicting the heavens. She also carried a pair of compasses. No doubt she represented astrologers before she was connected with the science of astronomy," Dick went on.

"Oh, dear! Those coffee cups!" said Hero. "And somebody was to die. It just shows how much trust one should put in any kind of soothsaying, because nobody has died."

"Euterpe, the Muse of lyric poetry, whom I imagine as being perhaps the youngest and fairest of the Nine," Dick continued earnestly, ignoring the flippant interpolations, "is shown holding a flute; Calliope, who not only inspired epic poetry but was also the Muse of that eloquence in which the Greeks delighted, held a stylus and tablets, for whereas lyric poetry could be tossed off, no doubt, by any well-educated youth who desired to pay tribute to loveliness, the epic needed thought and the consumption of the midnight oil. Polymnia at some time seems to have had her original status of the inspirer of divine hymns reduced (in my opinion) to that of the Muse of mime, although this was also

sometimes considered to be a subsidiary attribute of Erato and, I feel, more suitably so."

"What have you against Erato, Papa Ronald?" demanded Hero, turning, this time, to look at him.

"Perhaps I do not care for her because she has never smiled on me," said Dick, "and is now unlikely to remedy this lapse."

"If she had wished Mrs. Cowie on you I would rather Mrs. Cowie were dead," said Hero, without heat but with simple truthfulness. "Fancy having to share one's life with the deadly nightshade!"

"Yes. What a woman!" said Simon. "I am even sorry for Owen, the botanical bear, although I do not like him, that he has condemned himself to marry her."

"What of Melpomene and Clio?" asked Dame Beatrice, playing what seemed to have become her rôle of deflecting conversations into more suitable channels.

"Of Melpomene I know nothing," said Dick flatly. "She has never troubled my life since I lost my parents."

Dame Beatrice thought of Megan Hopkinson, who had killed a man for his sake, and found herself unable to believe him.

"But Clio," went on Dick, "to me the greatest of the Muses (although the Greeks gave that honourable place to Calliope) is always shown bearing a trumpet. And now, Simon, if you will find a spot where you can safely drive the car off the road, I have here some wheat grains and honey, and in this flask a mixture of honey, water, and milk. I think we will offer a libation to the Muses before we go on our way."

"And then for Athens!" cried Hero. "Athens, with lovely shops and restaurants and night-clubs and all the amenities of civilisation! Oh, I cannot wait to get there! What fun we will have! What entertainment! Plays, son et lumière on the Acropolis, dancing, and cabaret! Let us depart from this austere place at once, and then I will sing hymns to Apollo

and the Muses until Papa Ronald himself shall ask me to be silent.”

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### **Melpomene, the Muse of Tragedy**

“For they will come like sirens to the mountains,  
and yield out their piteous and lamentable  
cries.”

“Wherefore, without any further delay, she  
went up to a high tower to throw herself down  
headlong . . .”

An enquiry at the desk elicited the information that the Corfu party had not yet booked in at the Athens hotel. Dick was unperturbed and Hero and Simonides were pleased.

“So we go shopping tomorrow, you and I, while Papa Ronald goes to find his friends at the archaeology school and Simon meets his girls,” said Hero to Dame Beatrice. “How long that dreadful Mrs. Cowie and the poor Mary stay on Corfu, it troubles me not at all, and I dislike those primitive boys.”

“One would think they should be here by now, though,” said Dame Beatrice, “if they are to catch the boat and the aeroplane.”

“Oh, that Henry Owen, he is a maniac for his silly plants. Perhaps he and that dreadful little Roger fall and break their necks,” continued Hero cheerfully. “Do you know why Papa Ronald would not let us go to Leukas? It is because he knows some woman, I think, who lives there, and he is embarrassed to encounter her again.”

“Dear me!” A former suspicion returned to Dame Beatrice’s mind.

“Oh, not afraid for his life or that perhaps he have to marry her—nothing like that. I think he knows her in the old days before Simon and I were born, and I think perhaps it was a love affair—you know?—and would make for embarrassment nowadays. She might even be our mother, whom we do not remember.”

In the morning there was still no sign of Henry Owen and his entourage, and it was not until the following day that there was any news of them. Dame Beatrice and Hero had come back to lunch after a morning’s shopping in Stadium Street and Dick had just come back from the British School of Archaeology. Simon was in the hotel lounge after visiting Vouliagmeni beach with a mixed party of friends for a swim, and was looking at a newspaper while he waited for the others to join him. When Dame Beatrice and Hero came down from their rooms after their outing, he said,

“Leukas is in the news, and by somebody of your name, Hero. A Madame Metoulides has been fished up out of the sea by the promontory called Sappho’s Leap. This is an English paper two days old, and it says the lady was an Englishwoman. Perhaps we shall hear more about it from Mr. Owen when he comes.”

“May I see the paper?” asked Dame Beatrice. Simon handed it to her, and she read the short paragraph twice before she handed the paper back.

“I think it is our mother,” said Hero unemotionally. “I know Papa Ronald did not want to go to Leukas. There was a story—oh, a long time ago, long before we were born—and it was very sad, I think. My Greek foster-mother knew a little—perhaps more than she told me.”

“This,” said Dame Beatrice, “is very interesting, and so is the Stop Press news.”

“I did not read that,” said Simon. He scanned it. “Now that is interesting, too,” he said. “My soul informs me that



here is a great mystery."

"'Here be dragons,'" quoted Dame Beatrice. At this moment Dick came into the lounge.

"On Leukas have been tragedy and mystery," said Hero.

"The tragedy cannot affect us," said Simon. "A woman has thrown herself over Sappho's Leap. The mystery is nearer to us. Mrs. Cowie has disappeared."

"Papa Ronald," said Hero, "I think the tragedy *does* affect us. Please tell me how it seems to you. Was not Madame Metoulides my mother?"

"Your mother?" said Dick. "Oh, you mean because of the name. No, no, she was not your mother. You have no need to think that. I daresay Metoulides is not an uncommon name. But the news of this disappearance is most disquieting. Our real concern must be for Mrs. Cowie."

"I do not feel so much of this concern," said Hero. "I think she has quarrelled with Mr. Owen, or has found the boys too much for her. There would be nothing more in it than that. She has perhaps taken the steamer and gone across to Italy. It is no great distance from Leukas."

"Nothing is said in the newspaper about Mary," said Simonides. "Would Mrs. Cowie go away without her?"

"Perhaps Mary has accepted Julian to be her husband," said Hero. "I think that might upset Mrs. Cowie very much. She will still need an unpaid secretary, even after she has married Mr. Owen. Do you not think so, Dame Beatrice?"

Dame Beatrice declined to comment, and had the best of reasons for this, although she did not immediately disclose them.

"I wonder," said Dick, "whether I ought to go to Leukas and find out whether I can be of any help to Henry? On the other hand, if I do so, he may already be on his way here, and, in that case, we should miss one another. What do you think, Beatrice?"

"Newspaper reports are often exaggerated," she replied. "I think you would do better to remain in Athens. Mr.

Owen can easily contact you if he needs help. He knows the name of this hotel."

"As for going to Italy," said Simonides, "yes, if she had left from Corfu. There is a good and frequent service of steamers to Brindisi. But if she disappeared on Leukas it would be more difficult, perhaps. But I am more interested in this lady who suicides at Sappho's Leap."

"Oh, well, we must do as Dame Beatrice says. We will wait and see," said Hero. "And now, Simon, did you get tickets for son et lumière on the Acropolis? Let us have lunch, and then we will show you and Papa Ronald all our beautiful shopping, and after that we will all go to the beach and swim and lie in the sun and sit under big umbrellas. Oh, how much I like to be in Athens!"

"I don't think I'll accompany you to the beach," said Dick. "I'd prefer to stay here in case the others turn up."

Dame Beatrice elected also to remain at the hotel, so the twins went off after lunch, disdaining the hour of siesta, and their elders settled down in armchairs in the cool and curtained lounge, Dame Beatrice to read and Dick to sleep. At half-past four he opened his eyes and said,

"It isn't Mrs. Metoulides, you know, Beatrice. I'm very much afraid it's Chloe Cowie. They are very much alike to look at, and I have good reason to think that a mistake may have been made."

"So Mrs. Metoulides is Megan Hopkinson," said Dame Beatrice.

"How did you guess?"

"Well, the resemblance is striking, as you say, and I noticed it from the first. I remembered Megan clearly from that ill-fated expedition on which you and I accompanied Sir Rudri Hopkinson all those years ago, and, of course, I came to certain conclusions when I realised that you had adopted one twin and were the official guardian of the other. Megan, however, can hardly be their mother—or can she?"

“Oh, no, she is not their mother. She is their great-aunt. They are the grandchildren of her older sister Olwen, but, of course, they were born out of wedlock.”

“Oh, Olwen, yes. I remember Marie Hopkinson’s telling me that Olwen was married to a schoolmaster and was expecting her first child.”

“Well, that child was Chloe Cowie. It’s not a long story and, until now, not really a sad one. Olwen married a Philip Bosfield, an Englishman. That was in 1935. In 1937 Chloe was born to them. In 1939 Philip joined up and was killed at Dunkirk. Olwen was in England with the child, but after the war she came back to Athens to live with her parents. Well, at the age of fifteen, Chloe, always headstrong and rather foolish, allowed herself to be seduced by a Greek, who, of course, deserted her when he knew there was a baby on the way, and at the age of sixteen she bore the twins. Marie and Rudri did what they thought was best, and fostered the babies on a Greek wet-nurse. When they were a year old, or thereabouts, Megan offered to have them, and they lived with her until she married. That was a couple of years later. Her husband, also a Greek, was named Metoulides. He did not want the children, and one cannot blame him for that, so they were fostered again. Hero kept the name Metoulides, but I have no idea what Simon was called, because I adopted him when Megan wrote to me and he took my name. Of course, he has been brought up mostly in Greece, and went to school here, so what with that, and the fact that he takes after his natural father in looks and temperament, he is much more Greek than English or Welsh.

“I lost track of Hero for many years, but before Sir Rudri died he wrote and begged me to become her guardian. I made enquiries, discovered that her Greek foster-mother had remarried and returned to Greece with the child, and so I claimed her, the woman and her husband being more than

willing to give her up, although they had been good to her, and she has been a member of my household ever since."

"And you did not tell the children that they were twins?"

"No. It would have meant telling them the whole story, including, I was afraid, the news that they were illegitimate."

"So Chloe Cowie was their mother," said Dame Beatrice. "And, of course, she did not realise that when she met them."

"They were fostered out almost as soon as they were born. Strange how they both disliked her, and she them," said Dick, shaking his head. "So much for natural affection! Of course, when I first made her acquaintance, I had no idea of all this, but the resemblance to her Aunt Megan was sufficiently striking to set me thinking, and her age and the age of the twins was about right, and she has always been reticent about her early life, so I put two and two together. When she married this man Cowie I have no idea, nor do I know exactly when he died, but both matters are beside the point. I admit, though, that at one time I was strongly attracted to Chloe. However, having come to know more about her since we came to Greece, I consider that I have had a lucky escape, unkind though it may be to say so."

"What makes you think that the woman who committed suicide on Leukas is not Megan Hopkinson?"

"Because Megan Hopkinson should have left Leukas, where she has been living in seclusion, almost as soon as our party arrived there. I had advised her that some of us were proposing to visit the island and she thought it better not to meet Chloe again, just in case something should crop up. Megan is a singularly honest and forthright person, and she was afraid of what might happen when Chloe realised how very much alike they were. Of course, with our common interest in the twins, Megan and I have kept in touch."

"I see. But when she reads about the suicide in the newspapers, will she not come forward?"

"Oh, undoubtedly. But, if it is Chloe, I wonder what on earth possessed her to do it? Do you suppose—but, no! It was all such a long time ago—twenty years or more—and she has built up for herself a reputation and a small fortune since then. It would not really matter now if that old affair *did* come out. Nobody would blame her in this day and age, and, after all, she was scarcely more than a child at the time the twins were conceived."

"I can think of nobody less likely to commit suicide, though. Is the theory of accident quite ruled out?" asked Dame Beatrice.

"I should not have thought so. Oh, well, perhaps we shall know more about it when Henry gets here."

This happened at six o'clock, before Hero and Simon returned to the city from the beach. Julian and the boys went straight up to their rooms as though by some pre-arranged plan, and Henry and a very subdued Mary joined Dick and Dame Beatrice in the lounge. Henry, far from being subdued, was in blustering mood.

"So there you are," he said. "What a business! What a business, eh? Whatever can have come over the wretched woman? That's what we'd all like to know. Where on earth has she managed to get to? Most inconsiderate I call it."

Dick was about to speak, but Dame Beatrice prevented him by saying:

"We know nothing except what we have read in the English papers, and that was little enough. Pray give us your own account of what has happened."

"Don't know that I can. My head—my brain—won't function. Don't know when I felt so upset and all at sea."

"You got back to Patras and went on to Leukas from Olympia quite safely, then?" said Dame Beatrice, turning to Mary. "Was your aunt there when you arrived?"

"I don't know," said the girl, almost inaudibly. "I kept out of her way, because I knew how angry she would be with me for going off alone like that. But, of course, when

she wasn't in our room when I went up to change for dinner, I felt sure that something must have happened and when she didn't appear at table I asked Mr. Owen . . ."

"And, of course, I could tell her nothing," said Henry, "and I was horrified when I found that she could tell me nothing, either. Well, I suppose you'd better have the whole story from the beginning. The trouble is that the local people are so full of this woman who committed suicide at Sappho's Leap, as they call it, that we couldn't get any help from them in finding out where Chloe had got to. Could she have had a brainstorm or something, do you think? I mean, it seems such a dashed uncomplimentary thing to do, to leave us all flat like that, without so much as a word."

"Henry," said Ronald Dick, "you were going to tell us the whole story. I am particularly anxious to hear it, for a reason I will disclose to you later. Do begin at the beginning, my dear fellow, and let us have all the details. You know of Beatrice's reputation for solving mysteries. Do give her the opportunity of helping us to solve this one."

"Eh? Yes, of course. That's what I said I was going to do, didn't I? Trouble is, where do I begin?"

"Begin," said Dame Beatrice, "from what was our last sight of Mrs. Cowie when she drove off with the rest of you from Andritsena."

"Well, we did as Edmund suggested and took the coast road by way of Pyrgos to Patras. Chloe wanted to spend the night there, but I suggested that, as we'd driven only just over a hundred miles, it was silly to break our journey before we got to Leukas. We had a bit of an argument, as a matter of fact, and when she first went missing I thought she was indulging in a fit of sulks. She never could bear to be thwarted. Of course I never dreamed she'd cut her stick and opt out altogether. Then came the second upset. We couldn't make out where Mary was." He stared accusingly at her. "Of course, I know the answer now. She'd given her aunt and the rest of us the slip so as to sneak back to

Olympia. She must have done it as soon as we landed. So Chloe had two of us to be mad at."

"Well, why not?" asked Mary defiantly. She turned to Ronald Dick. "Wasn't I justified? What's the use of coming to Greece if you have to miss one of the most important sites? I was sick and tired of being Aunt Chloe's yes-woman. Wouldn't you have been?" She fired this last question belligerently at Dame Beatrice, who replied composedly,

"The point does not arise, but I can understand your reactions. How did you obtain the money to make the necessary journey?"

"Oh," said Mary bitterly, "I suppose *you* would say I stole it. As though, over and over again, I haven't earned it! All right, then, I *did* steal it. Anyway, I got it, and, for once, I wasn't afraid to use it. I *hated* that woman! Hated and hated and hated her! And I wanted her dead."

"My dear Miss Mary!" cried Dick, appalled. "Whatever makes you say such a thing?"

"Because I believe she *is* dead, although you'd call that wishful thinking," said Mary, "I suppose." She spoke quietly, the venom gone from her voice, and glanced nervously at Dame Beatrice.

"The body was identified as that of a Mrs. Metoulides," said Henry slowly. "You don't really think, do you—?"

"You didn't see it, of course," said Dame Beatrice.

"No. And you really mustn't pay any attention to that poor girl," said Henry. "Naturally she's upset—we all are—about Chloe's going off in the extraordinary way she seems to have done, leaving the poor child high and dry, but there can't be any doubt about the identification of the body."

"There is very great doubt about it, Henry," said Dick. "It is not for me to alarm and worry you, but I have good reason to believe that a mistake has been made. You see, I happen to know this Mrs. Metoulides, and, so far as I am aware, she is still alive and well."

"My dear chap, that's impossible! She's well known, it seems, as a political trouble-maker. Probably committed suicide because the powers that be had caught up with her. At least, that's the rumour which was going the rounds."

"The physical resemblance between herself and Mrs. Cowie is striking. As I have known both of them I can be a witness to that. I—I suppose the body had suffered some ill-effects when it was recovered?" asked Dick.

"I haven't seen it, I tell you. By the way, this name Metoulides. I seem to have heard it before."

"Yes. It is the name of my ward Hero, but no doubt it is a common name enough."

"Of course, of course. These coincidences occur. I daresay it's a common enough name hereabouts, as you say. But what makes you think that the body is not that of this Mrs. Metoulides?"

"Because I have been in correspondence with Mrs. Metoulides for years."

"That doesn't prove anything."

"I can show you her latest letter, in which she states in unmistakable terms that if our party was going to Leukas she had the best of all reasons for leaving it."

"That doesn't prove anything, either. No, my dear chap, Chloe has simply run out on me. It's of no use for you to make these melodramatic statements. What possessed her, as I say, I don't know, and if you were a friend of this Mrs. Metoulides, well, all I can say is that I'm very sorry. But there it is. Those islanders can't be wrong. Why should they say it's Mrs. Metoulides if it isn't?"

"Because there is this strong resemblance, as I've told you, to Mrs. Cowie. Surely you can see that if Mrs. Metoulides left Leukas some days ago, and Mrs. Cowie has disappeared, the likelihood is that the one has been mistaken for the other?"

"Then what do you propose we should do?"



"Wait for Mrs. Metoulides to proclaim herself alive and well," said Dame Beatrice, "and, if she is suspected of subversive activities, I doubt whether she will."

"But, if you're right, Chloe Cowie has been buried under the wrong name, and that is terrible," said Henry.

"Oh, the funeral has already taken place, has it?"

"Oh, yes. You see, the fatality happened on the very evening of our arrival. I thought I'd made that clear."

"I wonder whether I ought not to go to Leukas myself and make some enquiries," said Dick. "After all, as a member of my party, Chloe was my responsibility."

"Forgive me for asking," said Dame Beatrice, "but was it only about staying the night at Patras that you had a disagreement with her, Mr. Owen?"

"Well, Dame Beatrice, as to that, it was about Mary, among other things, that we had what you call a disagreement. It began with a discussion about Chloe's books. She still seemed determined to continue with her writing after we were married. We'd already argued about it, as you probably know, and I thought I'd made my views quite clear. I consider that a wife has a duty to her home and her husband, and a duty which is incompatible with sitting up half the night writing trashy novels. Then there was the question of Mary's future."

As though on cue, Mary joined in.

"All I want," she said, "and Mr. Owen is in full agreement, is to be independent of Aunt. All I asked was to be sent to a decent commercial college where they would give me a secretarial training. It wouldn't have cost her all that much, but, of course, she preferred just to pay for my bread and butter and keep me at her beck and call. Besides, I wouldn't want to live in the same house as the boys. I don't doubt they're nice boys, but they're dreadful teases and Edmund is very rough and uncouth and Roger plays silly pranks. I shouldn't have a minute's peace with them, especially if Julian leaves to get married."

"I think that outcome is rather less likely than it was," said Dick. "If I am not mistaken, Hero has changed her mind about him."

"That makes it all the more unsuitable to have him and Mary living in the same house," said Henry. "Besides, I could get Chloe to see things my way, and make a proper home, if she didn't have Mary to do her typing and look up her references and deal with her correspondence. She gets a ton of fan-mail from idiot women with nothing better to do than write half-baked letters asking for her advice—advice, indeed! As though such a feather brain would have any advice to give that was worth the notepaper it was written on!"

"I used to supply the advice—under orders, of course," said Mary. "But I wouldn't call my aunt feather-brained. She was too good a business-woman for that, and as hard as granite."

"Well, in the end, and to conclude the argument," said Henry, "I told Chloe flatly that I expected her to act as my hostess and housekeeper and not as a ruddy penny-a-liner. I made it clear that I would marry her on those terms and on no other."

"Dear me! That sounds very high-handed and, surely, somewhat unreasonable," said Dame Beatrice.

"I can't see that. A husband must have *some* rights over his wife, even in this day and age. He is, after all, the senior partner."

"I would exclude the word 'senior.'"

"Oh, you women always stick together! Anyway, she refused my terms and also refused to hand me back the ring. And then she bounced herself off and I haven't set eyes on her since."

"But she kept the ring," said Dame Beatrice. "Was that cupidity, I wonder, or a sign that perhaps the fortress would fall to you after all?—that she intended, after keeping you on tenterhooks, to let you have your way?"

"I took it to mean the latter. If it didn't, then I shall sue her for the return of the ring. Half-hoops of diamonds come expensive."

"I believe, my dear fellow," said Dick, "that a recent judicial pronouncement would preclude you from suing for the return of your gift. In any case, I think a court of law would regard your terms as very unreasonable. Chloe had built herself up a pleasingly lucrative source of income, and, no doubt, was under contract to her publishers. Perhaps, if she had agreed to slow down her output, let us say—producing one book in the time she now devotes to two or even three—could you not have struck a bargain along those lines? However, I am afraid that all this is now beside the point. I am afraid our poor, unfortunate friend is gone from us for ever. As soon as Mrs. Metoulides realises what has happened, and that this is a case of mistaken identity, you will have to face the truth. Poor Chloe must have lost her footing at Sappho's Leap and fallen to her death. The Leap was her reason for ever going to Leukas, and I am certain that when she left you in such a tempestuous way that is where she went."

Henry rose abruptly from his chair.

"Well, the sooner the one of them who is alive turns up again, the sooner we can set our minds at rest," he said.

"I suppose they never managed to reach Corfu," said Dick, when he was left alone with Dame Beatrice. "No wonder Henry is unreasonable and short-tempered."

"He is certainly not overcome with grief at the loss of Mrs. Cowie. Whichever of you is right about the identity of the dead woman, there is little doubt in my mind that she has left him for good, whether she is dead or alive."

"There is no doubt in *my* mind that she is dead," said Dick. "If she had merely left him, she would have taken Mary with her. That is my surest proof."

"Not if Mary was in hiding from her."

"You mean that Mary had already returned to Patras on her way to Olympia?"

"Oh, no, I do not mean that. I think that, unwittingly or not, she *did* take Mary with her—and to Sappho's Leap."

"Really, Beatrice, you are speaking in riddles. What are you suggesting we should do?"

"I am wondering whether we ought to make representations to the British Embassy."

"Oh, Megan will put things right. She is bound to see the account in the newspapers, and as soon as she does she'll come forward."

"I am not so certain about that. Did she say in her letter where she was going?"

"No, she made no mention of any particular destination. It would not be safe, perhaps, for her to do so if she thought, as apparently she did, that she was under suspicion."

"All the same, it seems to me that if Mrs. Metoulides had been going to come forward, she would have done so by this time. To the best of my recollection, Mr. Owen's party left Andritsena last Monday. Allowing that they did *not* spend the night at Patras before going on to Leukas, it seems that Mrs. Cowie—if it *was* Mrs. Cowie—met her death some time on Tuesday. That was exactly a week ago. We arrived in Athens yesterday, so here it is Tuesday again."

"I see what you mean about Megan. Perhaps, then, we ought to take steps. I will go to the Consulate first thing in the morning and ask for help in tracing Chloe. It seems to be my duty, and probably won't do Megan any harm."

"I really think it would be best. Apart from anything else, if the dead woman *is* Mrs. Cowie, there is Mary's future to be considered. Her circumstances may have changed in dramatic fashion if the body is that of her aunt."

"You mean that if Mary is her aunt's heiress . . ."

"Exactly."

"If only I could understand what possessed Chloe to do such a stupid thing! The very last woman to have made

away with herself, I would have said, and far too sensible to have met with a fatal accident by falling over a cliff."

"You have not brought yourself to consider the possibility that she was made away with, I notice, and that is the likeliest thing."

"Beatrice, really! Your suggestion horrifies me! I attempted to remove it from my mind when you offered it a moment ago. Whoever would think of committing such a dreadful crime?"

"Well, agreeing that this is merely an academic discussion, there are various possibilities, are there not? Mary wants independence; Julian wants to keep his employment if he is not going to marry Hero and her money; the two boys do not want a stepmother; Henry's story of the quarrel may be entirely fictitious, and the truth may be that he has changed his mind about wanting a wife and was angry enough to kill her when she would not return the ring. Incidentally, I think she may well have been entitled to it, since she would have helped to pay for it."

"Oh, really, Beatrice! Even in fun . . ."

"Oh, I am not speaking in fun. Apart from the fact that she must have helped to pay for the ring, if Mrs. Cowie is dead it was either accident or murder. Under no circumstances was she the woman to put an end to her own life. You know that as well as I do."

The British Embassy was in Gennadion Street. Dick had made an appointment by telephone and returned from it in the late afternoon. Henry and his sons, with Julian, had gone to Eleusis in quest of plants, particularly some varieties of the Greek anemone, although these would be past the flowering stage. Hero had greeted Julian coolly on the previous evening when they met at dinner, sufficiently so to inform him that anything there might have been between them was now at an end. In revenge he had devoted himself

to Mary, but she had been *distracte* and he found his efforts singularly unrewarding.

Hero and Simon had opted for the beach again, and this time Mary and Dame Beatrice had accompanied them. On the morrow the ship's party were due to embark, and those who had to return to England by air were to catch their plane in two days' time. Dame Beatrice had volunteered to remain in the hotel so that she could be on the spot to hear Dick's news when he returned from the Embassy, but he told her that he had promised to spend the rest of the morning with fellow-archaeologists at the British School. When they met again at the hotel in the late afternoon he had unexpected news.

"I put my point about fearing it might be Chloe who was killed at Sappho's Leap," he said, "but it appears that the authorities have the best of reasons for accepting the identification of the body. It appears that Megan's husband did not die in the ordinary way. He was executed."

"Really? What had he done?"

"Plotted against the State. What is more, Megan has long been suspected of doing the same thing, and it appears that the military police, or whatever they are, were on the point of catching up with her. It seems that her suicide was a foregone conclusion unless she wished to be arrested and tried."

"But, as a British citizen . . ."

"She wasn't. She assumed Greek nationality when she married. They were very nice to me at the Embassy, but what it all amounted to was a shrug of the shoulders and an attitude of, 'Well, what do you expect when foolish people marry abroad and then meddle in foreign politics? The Greeks, like the Irish and most unlike ourselves, take their politics seriously, and it is not for us at the Embassy to interfere in local matters.' So there we are and, unless you have anything to suggest, there, I suppose, the matter must

be allowed to rest. It is extremely unsatisfactory, but what more can we do?"

"Find out who killed Chloe Cowie," said Dame Beatrice. "She was an untoward and irritating woman, but she did not deserve to die. One thing is quite certain. If Megan Metoulides was in the kind of trouble you suggest, we can expect no help from her. She would be more than foolish to come forward and identify herself."

"Yes, indeed. One could not expect that. It would be too quixotic, especially as it would do nothing to bring Chloe Cowie back to life. As I see it, the death was providential for Megan. You don't think . . .?"

"No, I don't think that about Megan Metoulides, even to save her own skin," said Dame Beatrice. "I think a few questions might be put to the members of the Leukas expedition, though, beginning with Mary Cowie."

"You surely do not *really* suspect Mary of murdering her aunt?"

"I think her trip to Olympia needs more explanation than, so far, she has given. There are some glaring discrepancies in the account she gave me, you know."

"But that gentle, unassuming girl . . ."

"Would you have called her last outburst gentle and unassuming? There is no doubt that she has longed for her aunt's death. Whether she engineered it, is, of course, another matter."

"As I think you may have gathered, I have had thoughts of making Mary an offer of marriage. That would have released her quite effectively from her aunt's domination, would it not?"

"I doubt it very much. Apart from that, did Mary know of your intention?"

"Well, I need hardly tell you that I have made no mention of it to her in so many words."

"So that would not dispose of her motive for compassing the death, would it?"

"Oh, you are too hard, Beatrice, much too hard on the girl! That is a dreadfully cynical point of view."

"I am hard on nobody. She is by no means the only suspect. I thought I had made that clear."

"But I find it impossible to suspect any one of the party! I am sure not one of them is capable of committing such a crime."

"Well, we will look at each of them impartially and see what we can learn."

"There will not be much time. You and the rest of the steamer people join the ship at Piraeus tomorrow."

"Very true, so I will not begin with Mary. I can question her, as well as Julian, Roger, and Hero, on the cruise."

"Hero?"

"She is outside the area of suspects, I admit, but she may be able to fill in some details. Besides, she was present when Mary told those lies at Olympia. However, perhaps I ought to begin with you yourself, and then pass on to Henry, Edmund, and Simonides."

"My dear Beatrice, why not leave matters as they are? What good can come of all this questioning? None of our party can tell you anything more."

"I dislike untidiness, and to leave Mrs. Cowie's disappearance unsolved would be very untidy, don't you think?"

Dick sighed.

"You never did appear to take things very seriously," he said.

"I took them seriously enough, the last time you and I were both in Greece, to make certain that you were not allowed to take the blame for a murder which you had not (and could not have) committed. Have you forgotten the strange death of the young man Armstrong?"

"Oh, that! But it was all so long ago, and Armstrong, who was a brute and a bully, deserved everything he got. I



have always thought that. He cumbered the ground and the world is better without him."

"You have not forgotten that it was Megan Hopkinson who brought about his demise?"

"You never managed to prove that. Besides, from what I've learnt since, even his close relatives were glad to know that he was dead."

"That is beside the point. Tell me, Mr. Dick, after your ghastly experiences on that early tour, when, if Rudri Hopkinson was not insane, he was certainly not in a balanced frame of mind, why did you decide to plan this tour in honour of his memory? He really was not worthy of it, you know."

"I think I wanted to see Megan again. When the whole thing had blown over—and, after all, I was as much to blame for Armstrong's death as she was . . ."

"You purchased the ibex horns from which the lethal weapon, the bow, was fashioned, yes."

"And I found the piece of Mycenean gold which Armstrong filched from me. That was the thing, in the end, which caused all the trouble. Morally, I was guilty of his death."

"And you attempted suicide. And Rudri attempted to foist a photograph of Iaccus on to an unsuspecting public . . ."

"And Armstrong tried to blackmail him on the strength of it. Yes, it was a disgraceful business, all of it. I often think that nobody but Megan came out of it with any degree of credit, and yet you label her a murderess."

"And *you* did not marry her."

"And neither did you make public the fact that she shot and killed Armstrong."

"It was a justifiable action, as you indicate. I do not feel that the death of Chloe Cowie *was* justifiable, whoever caused it, and for whatever reason. By the way, I understood you to say, just now, that you made this journey

because you wanted to see Megan again, yet although you knew she was living on Leukas (for you have been in constant touch with her, you allege) you did not choose to go with Mr. Owen and his party to visit her on the island. Why was that?"

"I don't know, Beatrice. The suggestion that they should go to Leukas was made so suddenly that I was caught in two minds and my courage failed me at the crucial point, I suppose."

"I did not think it was made so suddenly. You knew that Mrs. Cowie was determined to go to Sappho's Leap. You knew that she, in her arrogance, equated herself with that poet of the Golden Age."

"You'll be telling me next that I followed her there, and killed her, hoping that she would be mistaken for Megan. It would make a good story," said Dick, with a gentle smile.

"I might believe it if I could work out when you would have had the opportunity to leave the rest of us," retorted Dame Beatrice, giving him a very sharp glance. "Another thing: those voices you claim to have heard in the museum here and on the Acropolis and again on Delos; were they subjective, or was it one of the boys or Julian Suffolk playing tricks on you, do you think?"

"I'm not sure that you are justified in taking your present tone. In any case, we have discussed all this before." Dick's nervous manner had left him. The suggestion that he might have killed Chloe Cowie appeared to give him pleasure.

"I know we have discussed it before, and I wish I could come to a settled conclusion concerning it," said Dame Beatrice. "You see, it *could* be that a ventriloquist lured Chloe Cowie to her death. She was foolishly obsessed with this idea that Sappho had been re-incarnated in her, and one of those boys, intending her no harm, might have played upon her imagination with fatal, if not tragic, results."

"You mean she was lured to those dangerous cliffs—she who confessed to having no head for heights—and there met with a fatal accident?"

"I am more inclined to think a fatal push. At present, conjecture as to the manner in which her death was brought about is useless. We need more evidence, and I think it is doubtful whether any more evidence will be forthcoming."

"Then why do we not agree that it must have been accidental death, and leave it at that?"

"The official verdict must stand, I suppose, but surely not a single one of us should rest or be able to compose our minds until we have found out the truth?"

"I cannot see that we can ever be sure that murder has been committed, any more than we can ever be sure whether it is Chloe or Megan who lies in that grave out on Leukas. And why did you drag up that dreadful affair of thirty years ago? What bearing can Armstrong's death . . ."

"His murder. It was no ordinary death."

"Very well, his murder. What bearing can it have on what has happened now?"

"Probably none. But does it not appear to you more than strange that *both* these so-called pilgrimages have ended in violent death? Could it be more than coincidence?"

"If you are asking me whether I'm superstitious, well, of course I am, but on this second pilgrimage the circumstances, all of them, have been so utterly different that there could not be any connection."

"You have no objection, I take it, to my questioning Simonides here in Athens, and Hero when she and I are on board ship?"

"You are a law unto yourself, of course. In any case, as they cannot possibly be implicated, either by accident or design, so far as I am concerned you may ask them anything you wish."

"Yes," Dame Beatrice agreed, "they are the only members of the party who would not appear to be

implicated, but I should not wish to leave them out of the reckoning because, in their very innocence, they might provide a pointer to the guilty party, and, after all, Chloe Cowie was their mother.”

“If there *is* a guilty party. But I should have hoped that Henry Owen and I could also be regarded as guiltless.”

“Mr. Owen went with the party to Leukas and admits to a quarrel. And I have already explained about you.”

“Yes,” said Dick, “you’ve already explained about me.”

## CHAPTER NINE

### **Clio, the Muse of History**

“All those things that happened astonished the goodman of the house and the residue that were present, insomuch they could not tell what to do, or with what sacrifice to appease the anger of the gods.”

“And what do you suppose would happen,” Dame Beatrice enquired, striking another note entirely, “if we began making enquiries about a valuable diamond ring on the finger of a woman who was under suspicion of subversive practices and of plotting to overthrow the government?”

“I don’t know what would happen, but I suppose we could take it for granted that, if the ring was on the dead woman’s finger, then the body was certainly Chloe’s.” Dick’s voice indicated his relief at the turn the conversation had taken.

“That is if the fishermen, or whoever picked up the body, had not taken the ring before they reported the fatality. No, I am afraid that clue is lost to us for ever. Besides, I am in no doubt—I have never been in any doubt—about the identity of the body. Chloe Cowie would not have left the island without Mary, and without a word to the others, simply because she had broken off her engagement and was quarrelling with Mr. Owen about the return of the ring.”

"No," said Dick, with a slight smile, "I suppose she would have remained with the party and made herself as unpleasant as she could to Henry. What *did* cause you to bring up that ancient story about Rudri's expedition, Beatrice? You had some definite object in mind. I feel certain of that. You caused me the greatest uneasiness. What exactly was your idea?"

"Is it possible that you do not realise what it was?"

"Perhaps I don't want to realise it. However, I suppose one issue must be faced. You mean that the person with most to gain by Chloe's death, as matters seem to have turned out, was Megan Metoulides, don't you? The fact that she is officially dead and buried releases her from police surveillance automatically."

"As matters have turned out, yes. On the other hand, I have always found that people who bear a strong physical likeness to one another are the last to realise, or, at any rate, to acknowledge it. Twins, of course, are prepared, not only to do so, but to exploit the close resemblance, but it is unlikely that Megan knew how much like Chloe she was. After all, they had not met for nearly twenty years."

"Hero and Simon are not much alike to look at," said Dick, "and they are twins."

"But they are far from being identical twins, either in looks or in temperament. Did you tell Megan which members of the party proposed to visit Leukas?"

"At the time, no, because it was all decided rather quickly, but when I told her, right at the beginning, that we were coming to Greece, I did give her some details as to how the party was constituted."

"So she knew that Mrs. Cowie would be coming?"

"Oh, yes, but I did not mention that Chloe was the niece whom she had known as Chloe Bosfield."

"Chloe is not so common a first name, is it? It could have awakened memories, perhaps."

“But how would Megan have persuaded Chloe to accompany her to Sappho’s Leap? After all, they were not even staying in the same hotel. I can’t see why they should have met.”

“I am not suggesting anything more than that it was providential, from Megan’s point of view, that the body should have been mistaken for hers.”

“I can’t think the doctor who examined the body could have taken much trouble over the post-mortem, you know. The two women may have been superficially alike, but there was a difference of a considerable number of years in their ages. Shouldn’t a post-mortem have established the probable age of the woman?”

“I doubt whether there *was* a post-mortem in our sense of such a proceeding. Why should there be? The body was fished up out of the sea, identified to the satisfaction of the authorities, and duly buried. If Megan was marked down as a rebel or a traitress, it would seem the most natural thing to their minds that she should commit suicide rather than be apprehended and perhaps submitted to such ill-treatment and insults as have come to be regarded as axiomatic and normal in our sick European society. In any case, nobody on the island was likely to take much trouble over closely examining a body which had been in the water and battered on the rocks. Suicide was the obvious verdict, with murder by some so-called patriot an interesting and, to some minds, a laudable possibility.”

Dame Beatrice did not believe that Henry Owen would have anything more to tell her, but she tackled him when, except for Simon and Edmund (who, in the words of the latter, had decided to go “on the town”) the rest of the party had gone to the Acropolis for *son et lumière*. She found Henry in the lounge writing up his diary and seated herself to wait until he had finished.

"Well, that's it," he said, putting down his pen. "Not much to report. I wish I could come here again in the autumn or late summer. *Pancratium maritimum*, the Sand Lily, you know, and one of the Mandrakes, the *microcarpa*. I got the *hausknechtii* this time, as it flowers in Spring and so I was just in time for it. It is a handsomer thing than *microcarpa*, but one would wish for both."

"Yours is a rewarding hobby."

"Oh, yes, not sorry I came on this trip; not sorry at all, in spite of what's happened. Dick was telling me about this Metoulides woman. Queer sort of story, and I'll tell you something else that's more than a bit odd. Before Chloe disappeared (or whatever it was—too late to wonder now, anyway) she lost some clothes."

"Lost some clothes? Her luggage went astray, do you mean?"

"No, her bags were there all right, but she claimed that one of them had been rifled and a summer frock and a light, matching jacket had been taken. Of course she made a stink at the hotel, but nothing came of it."

"When did she find out?"

"When we got to Leukas. I told her she couldn't have packed the confounded garments. She swore she had, and one thing led to another, and then, of course, we had this basic argument about husbands and wives and parted brass rags."

The clothes, of course, had been abstracted by Ronald Dick and sent to Leukas for a reason which seemed to him sufficient, Dame Beatrice concluded. She said:

"I wish you would tell me *exactly* what happened when you got to Leukas."

"Nothing much. We landed, and the usual rabble surrounded us, offering accommodation, but Dick had booked the hotel for us by telephone, so we sorted out a couple of taxis and had ourselves taken to the *Odysseus*. Ghastly dump, but I suppose Dick didn't know that when he



booked it, and, anyway, I thought we'd only be there one night. I wouldn't have stopped off on Leukas at all, if it hadn't been for Chloe and her wretched Sappho's Leap. Jolly well wish now I hadn't, but too late to worry about that, I suppose. Well, the arrangement was that we should go back to Patras the next day, when she'd seen this perishing promontory, and get the steamer from there to Corfu but when she turned up missing we had to stay on. Couldn't make out what had happened, and then there was all this hoo-ha about a woman's body being fished up out of the sea. Naturally, until the natives identified it as this Mrs. Metoulides, I concluded that Chloe had done something foolish in the dusk, and tumbled over the cliff. As a matter of fact, I still think that's what may have happened. She wouldn't have left us flat and just gone off on her own. Well, she went to her room to unpack, and then there was this flap about missing clothes and then this Leap business. She claimed she'd had a message from Sappho. I tried to persuade her that she'd got a bee in her bonnet and was talking through her hat. I pointed out it was a long way from the hotel and that nobody wanted to go with her until the following morning. Told her we'd fit it in before our boat left to go back to Patras, but, of course, she wasn't listening to me by then."

"So she went alone to Sappho's Leap, if that is where she did go?"

"Must have done. Should have thought she'd have had more sense. You know, I can't really think there's been a mistake. You see, I didn't worry at the time because I thought she was simply sulking in her room and was having something sent up for her and Mary. Then, at the end of dinner—neither of 'em having turned up—I was told a fellow wanted to see me. It was the driver, full of his grievances. He'd been out, as arranged, with the lady, he said, and had waited half an hour for her. I still didn't really believe that she'd been foolish enough to go to a place like Sappho's

Leap at that time in the evening, although I suppose, after what she'd said, it was the likeliest thing for her to have done.

"Anyway, the driver was babbling away in Greek, apparently to the effect that when there was no sign of the lady he concluded that she had come back earlier than expected and in somebody else's taxi, and he wanted to see her and get his fare because they'd had a definite arrangement, and she hadn't paid him for the outward journey either."

"I see. What did you do then?"

"Didn't know what the hell to do. Didn't even know at that time whether Mary was with her. Sent for the manager and asked for his advice. He said, 'Pay the driver and wait until the morning.' There were a number of English people on Leukas, he told me. No doubt the lady had met friends and been invited for dinner and they would bring her back in due course. I didn't believe a word of it, but I thought she might be in spiteful mood after the row we'd had, and was deliberately giving cause for anxiety, so I decided to let it ride. It still never occurred to me that she'd stayed at Sappho's Leap. I thought she was just playing up."

"Yes. And the next thing you heard was that this body had been picked up out of the sea."

"Oh, not then. Oh, no, we went back to Patras, as we'd arranged, thinking she'd be there, but, of course, she wasn't, so back to Leukas—a cursed nuisance, but I didn't see what else to do—and that's when we heard this buzz about the body."

"Did you ask to see it?"

"Yes, but they weren't having any. Said they knew who it was, all right, but, since a member of our party had disappeared, we had better stay on a bit in case news came of her. They promised that the police would make some enquiries, and I suppose they did, because the next thing we were told was that a woman had been seen taking a

caique, and the description fitted Chloe, particularly as the clothes she was wearing corresponded with a silk suit which Mary claimed was part of her aunt's holiday wardrobe, and which, from the description, corresponded with the things she claimed had been stolen, so that seemed, at the time, to clinch the thing."

"And the owner of the caique?"

"Heaven knows! We were told politely to stop wasting the time of the police, as our friend had obviously made her own plans. It's all completely unsatisfactory, as you can see, but I don't know what more we could have done."

"I suppose Mrs. Cowie's luggage was still at the hotel?"

"Oh, yes, and I concluded from that that she meant to come back, of course."

"So Mary had re-joined you by the time the body was found. Didn't you ask her where her aunt was?"

"I didn't get the chance. *She* asked *me*, so, naturally, I had to say I didn't know."

"Did you say you spent a night at Patras before you crossed back again to Leukas to see whether Mrs. Cowie had turned up again?"

"Oh, yes. Wish I'd stayed on there in the first place and gone direct to Corfu, then none of this need have happened. It was all Chloe's own fault, when you come to think of it."

Dame Beatrice ignored this somewhat heartless view.

"I suppose you have been told that we met Mary at Olympia the day we were there," she said.

"So that's where she went! Did she say why she'd bunked off like that on her own?"

"Only that there had been a delay in getting a boat at Patras, so she thought she would fill in the time by going to Olympia, as it would be a pity to miss it."

"But there *wasn't* a delay in getting a boat! I had to haggle a bit, that's all. You know how these Greeks love to bargain."

"Then her remarks to me were misleading."

“Damned lies, you mean. You know, Dame Beatrice, I don’t trust that girl an inch. I wouldn’t be surprised in the least if she engineered that dust-up between Chloe and myself. The girl’s a mischief-maker if ever I met one.”

“Is that how she strikes you?”

“And what’s more, I believe she’s a thief. We examined Chloe’s handbag, which she had left in the hotel safe when she went off in that headstrong, idiotic way. We hoped to find out (when she disappeared like that) whether she’d left any clue as to where she’d gone. Well, there was nothing in the bag in the way of money but a solitary pound note. All her other English money and all her Greek currency had gone, and so had her traveller’s cheques and her driving licence. Whether she’d brought her cheque-book with her of course I don’t know, but, if she had, it wasn’t there.”

“And what did you deduce at the time from all this? It did not immediately occur to you that Mary had stolen from the handbag before it had been locked up in the hotel safe?”

“I couldn’t make it out at all at first. I mean to say, if Chloe had decided to cut her stick and leave us, the first things she’d have thought of would be her handbag and her cash, and, I should have thought, at least a suitcase. The manager was unhelpful, and it was then I began to smell a rat and to wonder whether some of these Greeks had kidnapped her on her outing or something. I went to the local police after we got back to Leukas, not finding her at Patras, but they more or less shrugged their shoulders. You know what they’re like in this country. Anything goes, except politics. If they hadn’t been so positive that the woman they fished out of the rocks below Sappho’s Leap was this female spy, or whatever she was, I might have thought, even then, that it was Chloe, and that they’d murdered her for her cash and then found she hadn’t any money on her.”

“It does sound as though she went to Sappho’s Leap if she did not take her handbag.” (Henry’s story, Dame

Beatrice felt, was rather misleading. He seemed unwilling to admit that he *knew* it was to Sappho's Leap that Chloe must have gone).

"Oh, I do know that Mary had suggested it was safest to have both hands free in case there was any scrambling about to be done," he said.

"Did you hear Mary say this to her?"

"Oh, yes, on the boat going over."

"Mary, if I understood her correctly, claims that she had not been to Leukas when we met her at Olympia."

"I still don't understand how you came across her there. I didn't know you proposed to go to Olympia."

"Neither did I, until after we had parted from you at Delphi."

"So Mary would have been surprised to see you."

"Surprised and somewhat dismayed."

"How did she get there?"

"By hired car from Patras, so she said."

"And by hired boat from Leukas. I suppose she got the cash by rifling her aunt's handbag. Knowing Chloe, I bet she sent the girl down to the hotel desk to get the bag locked away. Isn't that the most likely thing, that Mary handed it in *after* she'd helped herself to the contents?"

Dame Beatrice thought it so likely that she did not reply. Instead she said,

"I am greatly concerned about it all. Tell me—I have a reason for asking this which I think you would appreciate if I told you what it was—did you have the ring inscribed?—the engagement ring you presented to Mrs. Cowie?—the ring she declined to return?"

"Mean, dishonest woman! Yes, I did. Mind you, I can understand why she refused to hand it over. It cost nearly three thousand quid."

"And you think it was the intrinsic value of the ring, and not its sentimental attraction, which made her decide to keep it?"

“Well, what do *you* think?”

“That it was a valuable property.”

“The stinking part is,” said Henry, in a burst of ill-timed confidence, “that I’d looked on the thing as an investment. What I mean is that naturally one wouldn’t chuck three thousand smackers away on a thing like an engagement ring. Nobody could expect it. I thought that when the time came for Edmund to go to Cambridge, or whatever university would have him, I’d claim the ring back, get it decently copied so that none of our friends would know the difference, give Chloe the paste replica, and flog the original for a better price than I paid for it.”

Dame Beatrice thought of some remarks which had been made to her by Chloe about jewels in general and, in particular, gems owned by people who had replicas made in order to keep up with the Joneses when they had sold the originals.

“And you had the ring inscribed?” she repeated.

“Extra and unwarranted expense, I know, but Chloe wanted some words on the inside of it, so, guided by her, I had young Suffolk write out something for me in Greek and as I’d bought the ring in Athens it was easy enough to have the words done in Greek characters. The jeweller, in fact, thought well of the idea, and got his engraver to make a very neat, nice job of it.”

“And the words?—I stress that I have a reason for asking.”

“The words? Can’t remember exactly. I know they were a quotation of some kind. The meaning, more or less, was *The girdle of Aphrodite* or some such rubbish. Aphrodite! I ask you! Really, the vanity of some middle-aged women is beyond measure!”

“And you paid nearly three thousand pounds for the ring?”

“As an investment, mind you, and now all that lovely money is in the pants’ pocket of some Greek fisherman or

rozzer, unless it's at the bottom of the sea."

"Mrs. Cowie would have wished her share in the investment to go ultimately to Mary, no doubt," said Dame Beatrice. Henry stared at her and then laughed.

"Trust the businesslike Chloe to tell other people she put up two-thirds of the money!" he said. "Well, perhaps Mary pinched the ring at the same time as she pinched the cash. I suppose Chloe, when you come to think of it, wouldn't have been sporting the ring immediately we'd had the father and mother of a row."

As Dame Beatrice concluded that not until the small hours were the two young men likely to return to the hotel, she decided that it would serve no purpose to wait up for them, especially as they would be, if not slightly inebriated, certainly unwilling to indulge in serious conversation. The ship on which she was to travel had reached Piraeus, but was not scheduled to leave port until four in the afternoon, so there would be plenty of time to talk to the two boys before she had to embark. She decided to tackle Edmund first, and to put off questioning Simonides until later, so that, if there were not time enough to speak to them both, the more important witness would have been interviewed.

The difficulty was to detach Edmund from his brother and Julian and she was obliged to do it in the end by asking him outright for a word in private. This put him on his guard, but, fortunately, not in the way she feared.

"Look here," he said, in his stolid, ox-like way, "I've got a man's feelings, you know, but I swear I haven't got the restaurant girl into any trouble."

"Are you certain of that?" asked Dame Beatrice, deciding to play it by ear. Edmund grinned.

"Her father busted it up by coming into the kitchen at the wrong moment," he said. "How did *you* know anything about it? He hasn't come along here, has he? There was

nobody out last night with me but Simon, and he's a sport. Besides, he was busy somewhere else on his own account, so he couldn't blow the gaff on me, even if he wanted to."

"So this took place last evening," said Dame Beatrice. "You know, my dear Edmund, if you must commit a man's indiscretions you must also learn not to talk in your cups."

"Oh, Lord!" said Edmund, taken aback. "Did I babble? Can't remember a thing after I left the girl and went on the town. Can't even remember at all clearly how I got back here, but I've some vague recollection of meeting up with Simon again some place or other. Oh, gosh! Is my father in on this? He's a bit of a puritan, you know."

"Your father knows nothing of it."

"I say! You're not going to tell him what I said when I got back?"

As Dame Beatrice had no idea what he had said when he got back, since she had been in her room and was probably asleep at the time, she was able to reassure the young man.

"In return," she said blandly, "I would be glad if you would help me over something which really *is* my concern."

"Oh, yes, of course. Oh, rather. It's pretty decent of you not to . . ."

"What do you think has happened to Mrs. Cowie?" asked Dame Beatrice, cutting him short.

"I haven't a clue."

"Her disappearance is very mysterious. I am quite at a loss to understand it, and I should be very glad to have it explained. So, if you can tell me anything helpful . . ."

"Well," said Edmund awkwardly, "she and the gov'nor had had a bit of a toss-up, hadn't they? Don't you think she was in a bit of a tizzy and sort of slung her hook to—well, to sort of show him? She'll probably turn up again this afternoon all right. You'll find her on board when the ship sails, I shouldn't wonder. She's simply dodging Dad so as to rub it in a bit."



"Do you really think so?"

"Well, I'll tell you what," said Edmund. "To be perfectly honest, if the woman who fell over the cliff hadn't been identified, I might have thought she was Mrs. Cowie. I'll admit that."

"Why might you have thought it was Mrs. Cowie?"

"Why?" Edmund avoided his interlocutor's sharp black eyes. "Well, what I mean is—well, it seemed a bit odd that one woman tumbled over a cliff and another woman disappeared without (so to speak) trace, on the same small island and at roughly the same time."

"I agree with you. It was almost more of a coincidence than one finds easy to credit. Tell me, dear child, do you ever practise ventriloquism?"

Edmund, obviously, was taken off his guard by the sudden change of subject.

"Me? Ventriloquism? Why?" he feebly asked.

"An interesting and sometimes, I feel, a somewhat mischievous art. Would you call it an art?"

"Well, no, I shouldn't think it was an art. More of a sort of music-hall stunt, you know."

"Nor mischievous?"

"Well, I suppose one can have a bit of fun with people over it. Kidding them along a bit, you know."

"Such people as Mr. Dick, for example?"

"Oh, hang it all, it didn't do any harm! He's a bit of an old stick, you know. It was just for kicks we stirred him up. He's a credulous old bird. Look at this expedition. He calls it a pilgrimage, I ask you!"

"We?"

"Oh, well, me, then. It was only a gag."

"Perhaps Mr. Suffolk was implicated."

"Oh, no, no. Not what you'd call *implicated*. He taught me how to pitch my voice and speak from the stomach and all that. He himself is very good at it. He could go on the halls or television except for one thing."

"He can be seen using his lips," said Dame Beatrice.

"How do you know?" Edmund looked surprised and impressed.

"Somebody who was on the cruising liner with us told me so, I believe. I know I heard it somewhere, and it was not from Mr. Suffolk himself, of course. What about Roger? Is he also an exponent of the art, or, as you would say, stunt?"

"Good Lord, no! Roger's no good at it at all. He doesn't begin to know how to pull it off. If he told you he does, he was kidding. He probably *will* tell you he can do it, because he's sick to think he can't, but the thing is not to believe him. Oh, he practises hard enough, but it's hopeless. He just simply hasn't a hope in hell of throwing his voice. He's probably far too young."

This vehemence impressed Dame Beatrice, although not quite in the way the speaker intended.

"To get back to a previous topic," she said, "I wish you would give me your own account of what happened after your party left ours at Andritsena."

"Happened? Well, nothing. We went to Patras and Mrs. Cowie wanted to stay the night, but we got a boat to Leukas and put up at a pretty God-forsaken hotel, and then our lot went botanising and the next we knew was that this woman had been picked up at the foot of those cliffs and that Mrs. Cowie had cut her stick."

"So Mrs. Cowie did not accompany you on your botanising ramble. When did you miss Mary Cowie?"

"Miss her? As when?"

"That is what I am asking you. She turned up at Olympia, you know. Did she get as far as Leukas and come back to Olympia from there, or did she leave the party when it arrived at Patras?"

"I wouldn't know. I mean I can't remember. I didn't even know she went to Olympia. I can't say I missed her at any time."

"Why was that?"

"I don't know. I'm not interested in her particularly."

"It seems strange that, if she was missing from your party, you did not notice her absence."

"Does it?" said Edmund carelessly. "Which day did she go to Olympia?"

"Let me see. It would have been last Tuesday or Wednesday, I suppose."

"Oh, well, in that case, she'd certainly have come with us to Leukas. I mean, Mrs. Cowie would have raised Cain if she hadn't been on the boat, wouldn't she?"

"But you yourself have no recollection of her absence from your party?"

"Not the faintest. Roger and I were probably on the hills, or in the marshes, or somewhere, with the gov'nor. You know what he's like when he's on the hunt for plants."

"May I ask you a very personal question?"

"Why, sure." But Edmund looked somewhat alarmed.

"What was your feeling about the proposed marriage of your father to Mrs. Cowie?"

"Well, I can't say I was sold on the idea. She wanted me to have a year doing social services (or some such rot) abroad before I went to Cambridge. Besides that, she wanted to bung Roger into some putrid public school and get rid of Suffolk."

"As cut and dried as all that?"

"Oh, yes. The gov'nor stuck his feet in, but I think she'd have got her own way in the end simply by wearing him down. Fortunately this row they've had seems to have put paid to all that."

"What did Mary think about the marriage?"

"I haven't a clue. I know what the old man thought about adding Mary to the strength, but that's not quite the same thing, is it?"

Dame Beatrice had only two main questions to ask Simonides before her party embarked after lunch that afternoon. To him she said,

“Dear child, the young are apt to confide in the young, and sometimes they prefer to confide in the young of the opposite sex. Has Mary, by any chance, mentioned her aunt’s disappearance to you? I am not asking you to betray any secrets, of course, but Mrs. Cowie’s absence from the party which returned from Leukas is causing considerable concern.”

“Yes, I know,” said the feline youth. “Mary has said nothing at all to me. If she spoke her mind to anybody, my soul tells me that she would choose Julian.”

“And what about that lone journey of hers to and from Olympia?” was Dame Beatrice’s second question.

Simonides knit his black brows and his beautiful mouth curved into the smile of a faun.

“Ah, yes, that,” he said. “Very strange. One would think she knew that her aunt would not miss her, otherwise I do not think she would have dared.”

“That is a very interesting thought,” said Dame Beatrice. “But do you think, then, that her aunt disappeared from Patras, and not, as we have all assumed, from Leukas?”

“My soul gives me no assistance. I could not say. All I know is that a fast, specially-hired boat from Leukas, travelling through the night, could land a passenger at Pyrgos early in the morning, and a car from Pyrgos to Olympia would not take very long to make the trip.”

“But a journey like that would cost a good deal of money, and Mary, I think, has very little.”

“Ah, but Mrs. Cowie had a great deal,” said Simonides, with a sidelong glance, “and I think I heard that perhaps she did not take much of it with her when she went to look at Sappho’s Leap. She did go to Sappho’s Leap, did she not? And did not come back any more.”

“Well,” said Dame Beatrice, “there is an English saying that a nod is as good as a wink to a blind horse. You are a very intelligent young man.”

“And I do not think you are a blind horse. That is not your reputation. So—I give you my nod *and* my wink, but of actual knowledge I have none. I like simply—another of your English sayings—to explore all avenues. It is most mysterious, this disappearance. It is a conjuring trick, I think.”

Dame Beatrice did not ask him what he meant, but she was interested to note that his mind appeared to march at least some of the way with her own. The five who were to return by sea were driven in two cars to Piraeus. Dick drove with Dame Beatrice, Hero, and Mary, Henry took Julian and Roger and some of the women’s luggage to the ship. The farewells were brief and included promises all round of meeting again when both parties were in England once more, and then the two drivers returned to the hotel to wait for their flight home. Edmund and Simonides had bade the seafaring party a hearty farewell at breakfast, and they saw no more of them, neither did Dick and Henry wait to wave the ship goodbye. Dame Beatrice and Mary went straight to their respective cabins, but Hero strolled on deck with Julian and Roger and the five did not meet again until they joined forces in the dining-saloon that evening.

“It seems strange,” Julian said, “not to have Mrs. Cowie with us.”

“A strangeness I like,” said Hero.

“Wonder what made her go off like that?” said Roger. He looked across the table at Mary. “Didn’t she say anything to you about it?”

“Not a thing,” Mary replied composedly. “I think the upset she had with your father threw her off-balance and she acted on the spur of the moment.”

“Not much spur of the moment. If she’d been as sick as that with my father she’d have left us at Patras.”

"Oh, no, because of Sappho's Leap. Her sole reason for agreeing to go to Corfu was that she would be able to take in Leukas on the way."

"Seems a bit odd to me—well, more than odd—her vanishing suddenly like that. She goes off somewhere all on her own, and that's the last we see of her." He glanced at Dame Beatrice.

"She'll be in Christchurch by the time I get back," said Mary, thus closing, as she thought, the conversation.

"Mr. Owen told me that she left her handbag and her luggage behind," said Dame Beatrice.

"Oh, looking after the luggage, including packing it, fell to my lot," said Mary. "If she went off in a hurry, she would assume that I would see to it, as, of course, I have done."

"And her handbag?" said Julian, looking up from his plate. "Did you have to look after that, too?"

"Oh, well," said Mary, "she took her traveller's cheques and most of her money. I don't know why she left her handbag behind, except that I believe she had bought a new one. I suppose she transferred her effects to that. There isn't any mystery about it. I do wish you'd change the subject. We've discussed her disappearance *ad nauseam*. You've no idea how tedious I'm beginning to find it. The fact is that my aunt was a thoroughly selfish, inconsiderate woman with no thought for anything but her own convenience, as you'd know if you'd had to live with her."

"Oh, well, that arduous fate is not to be ours, it seems," said Julian, "unless she thinks better of jilting Mr. Owen and comes back into the picture when we're all at home again in England."

"If that happens, out you go on your ear, old boy," said Roger cheekily, "and I go to school and poor old Edmund goes out to some gosh-awful backward country and does social work, whatever *that* is."

"It will do him good," said Mary.

"And what will happen to you?" asked Roger. "I can't see father putting up with another woman in the house, whatever Mrs. Cowie might say."

"Oh, be quiet!" snapped Mary. "Didn't I ask you to change the subject?"

"Sorry. Still, one has to think of these things," said Roger. "I suppose, if it had been your aunt they found dead at Sappho's Leap, instead of this gaol-bird woman, you'd be pretty rich, wouldn't you?"

"Really!" Mary exclaimed. She turned on Julian Suffolk. "For goodness' sake tell him to shut up! Whatever you've taught him, it doesn't seem to have been good manners."

"Sorry again," said Roger. "I had no intention of getting your goat. I was just surmising."

"Any more of it, and you'll go and surmise somewhere other than in this dining-room," said Julian. "Get on with your dinner. We've all finished this course except you."

"What a mercy the chief steward gave us a table for four and allowed us an extra chair," said Hero. "We could hardly have held any of this conversation in public."

Nobody replied to this, and Dame Beatrice steered the conversation into another and a pleasanter channel. Her last recollection of the day was the wonderful sight of Cape Matapan thrusting a long black finger into the Mediterranean Sea as the ship, having left the Aegean, began to head westward for home.

She was not surprised on the following morning when Mary, immediately after breakfast, asked whether she might have a word in private. She invited the girl to her stateroom and opened the conversation herself.

"You wish to make some amendments to the story you told me when we met at Olympia," she said, "and I wish to ask you more questions about the mysterious disappearance of your aunt."

Mary looked anxiously and timidly at her.

"I know I went hysterical and said I hoped—well, I wished Aunt Chloe was dead," she muttered, "but it was only wishful thinking and of course I didn't mean it."

"I am sure you *did*," Dame Beatrice declared. "I am also quite certain that the body they recovered on Leukas was that of Mrs. Cowie."

"But how can you be so sure?"

"It was not in Mrs. Cowie's nature to take herself off like that, without a word to any of you. She was essentially a person who dramatised herself. She also liked the centre of the stage. If she had intended, after her disagreement with Mr. Owen, to return to England immediately, she would have said so publicly and with histrionic emphasis."

"But why should those Greeks have identified the body wrongly?"

"Because your aunt bore a remarkably close resemblance to *her* aunt, a Mrs. Metoulides, formerly Megan Hopkinson."

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"Possibly not. Well, now, suppose you recount whatever it is you came to tell me, and then I will relate to you a little of the seamier side of your family history."

"Well, it's only this," said Mary. "I told you I left the others at Patras waiting for a boat. That wasn't quite true. I went across the same day with them to Leukas and then, on that first evening, when Aunt was in a temper and decided to go off somewhere on her own, I thought I saw my way clear to slipping off, too, and getting a man to take me back to Patras or Pyrgos and so to Olympia in a hired car."

"Had you money enough for such a trip?"

"I told the boatman I would get my aunt to pay when we got back. I had just enough money for the taxi."

"I see. But I think you are again attempting to mislead me. I think your aunt had a companion on her trip and that she went to Sappho's Leap."



"Well, anyway, I didn't go. I was supposed to, but I'd set my heart on getting back to Olympia, so I pleaded a bilious attack. Aunt was sceptical and a bit cross, but, as I'd never walked out on her before, she concluded that my illness was genuine and I think she took Roger instead."

"How incredible! She disliked the young boy intensely."

"I suppose she felt any companionship was better than none. She was not a woman who enjoyed her own company. She probably bribed Roger to behave himself. That boy will do anything for money."

"Really? An aspect of his nature which is new to me. What did the taxi-driver say when he discovered that your aunt had disappeared?"

"How should I know? He called at the hotel and made a bit of a fuss and then he shrugged his shoulders and said that as the proprietor of the hotel was his brother-in-law he would arrange to have the cost of the car-hire put on the bill which Mr. Owen would be paying. I was only too thankful to accept such a solution, of course. I shall pay Mr. Owen back, I need hardly say, as soon as I am in a position to do so."

"And when, may I ask, will that be?"

"Why, as soon as—I mean, if my aunt really is dead—and that's what everybody seems to think—I suppose I shall come in for something in her will."

"You may have to wait some time before her death can be presumed, if her body has been wrongly identified in a foreign country. I doubt whether the Greeks would allow an exhumation, you know."

"Oh!" said Mary blankly. "I hadn't thought of that. I mean, until you seemed so certain that she was dead, I really hadn't thought that perhaps I'm today a rich woman."

"No? Oh, well, why should you have thought of it? Were you expecting to be your aunt's heiress, then?"

"Well, of course. She's often said so."

"You do not think her engagement, however temporary it may have been, caused her to alter her testamentary

depositions?”

“Good gracious, surely not! And even if she had, she would have altered them again when the engagement was broken off.”

“If she had been given time to do so,” said Dame Beatrice dryly. “But do not let me alarm you. I promised to tell you something about your family connections, so let us confine ourselves to that. Did you ever know Sir Rudri Hopkinson?”

“I’ve heard of him, especially from Mr. Dick when he proposed this trip, but he wasn’t a relative of mine, so far as I know.”

“Sir Rudri Hopkinson, who lived for a considerable part of his later life in Athens, had four children. The eldest, Olwen, married a man named Bosfield. They had one daughter whom they named Chloe. This was the aunt who took you to live with her.”

“So she was Sir Rudri’s grand-daughter! Well, this is the first I knew of it.”

“Possibly for the best of family reasons, as you will see. Rather late in life Chloe married Alan Cowie, your father’s brother, but before that—when she was quite a young girl—she was deceived (shall we say) by a Greek whose name has never been disclosed. The result of what we may call the *mésalliance* turned out to be twins with whom you have become acquainted.”

“Not—surely not—”

“Hero and Simonides? Exactly.”

“But how do you know all this?”

“I was friendly with Sir Rudri’s wife, Marie Hopkinson, and (as women will, no matter how indiscreet it may be to do so) she told me the family secrets.”

“I can’t believe it of Aunt Chloe! Look at the way she always insisted on a chaperone, even with Mr. Owen when she was engaged to him.”

"How little we know of those to whom we are closest. I daresay your aunt knew as little about your inner life as you knew about hers. We all have a skeleton in our cupboards."

"Indeed? Even you?"

"Even I, as you so kindly express it. I once committed murder."

"Murder?" Mary looked more than startled. "*You?*"

"Oh, yes, it seemed expedient at the time," said Dame Beatrice placidly, "and I still think it was the best thing to have done considering all the circumstances. I was an altruist in those days."

"But you weren't found out?"

"No. Unlike the late George Joseph Smith, whose method I followed, I did not repeat my effects."

"You're joking, and I don't think it's funny."

"Well, it is very ancient history, anyway. Shall I continue?"

"Well, I did wonder why Hero is called Metoulides. That was the name of the woman they fished up on Leukas, wasn't it?"

"It was the name under which she was buried, yes."

Mary hastened to refer to a previous subject.

"So the father of the twins—I mean, was that his name?"

"No, it was not. Marie Hopkinson did not know his name. All they could get out of Chloe was that he was a Greek and that she had met him in a restaurant in Soho."

"What a revolting story!"

"Full of human interest, surely?—although a lively young girl—for your aunt was certainly that at the time, according to Marie Hopkinson—had a right to expect something more of life than to be led astray at so early an age."

"You can't expect me to pity her. She gave me a home, but it was only a kennel. I was kept on the chain all the time. My life with her was one long bitterness and frustration."

"The story of the birthright and the mess of pottage is a legend, not history, of course."

"Well, what happened to the twins? And why is Hero called Metoulides? And is that Simon's name, too? He's down on the passenger list as Simon Dick."

"Yes, Mr. Dick adopted him."

"What on earth for? How does he come to know him?"

"I told you that the Hopkinsons had four children. Two of these were boys, Gelert and Ivor. Both are now living in the United States and need not concern us. The other child—she was the third, incidentally, and considerably younger than her sister, Mrs. Bosfield—was named Megan. She married a Mr. Metoulides and they agreed to give the twins their name. The first plan was to bring them up as their own children, but Metoulides brought himself into bad odour with the Greek government and so Megan thought it best, in the somewhat difficult and complicated issues which were involved, to foster the children. Hero was put into the care of a Greek widow who had a work permit for England but who subsequently re-married and returned to Greece with her husband. At this juncture Ronald Dick was brought into the picture again, for he had already formally adopted the male twin as his son. Now he agreed to make Hero his ward."

"But how did he become involved in the first place? He wasn't related to any of these people, was he?"

"No, but he had been in love with Megan, who had committed murder for his sake."

"Murder? Why do you keep harping on murder? My aunt wasn't murdered. If it was her body they buried, she must have met with an accident. Who would want to murder her?"

"Well, there were those who might be thought to have a motive."

"Oh, more than one person, you mean? Well, that's a relief, anyway."

"Yes, I thought it might be," said Dame Beatrice.

"But who are these people who had a motive?"

"Yourself, if you expected to be your aunt's heiress—"

"But I was back at Patras by then!"

"Oh, yes, of course. Your Olympian alibi," said Dame Beatrice.

"Well, you don't imagine I think of it like that!"

"Do you not? In your place I am inclined to think I should. But let us continue. There is a strong suspect in the person of Mrs. Metoulides, who wanted to leave the country."

"Why should she want to do that?" asked Mary, looking relieved.

"Her husband was executed for subversive activities and she herself was implicated and, I fancy, had been traced to Leukas, where she was virtually in hiding.

"Well, apart from those I have mentioned, there are others. Supposing Mrs. Cowie had altered her will in favour of Henry Owen when they became engaged to be married and had not had time to alter it again when the engagement was broken, Henry would have had a motive similar to your own, would he not, for wishing her out of the way?"

"Oh, but, surely—surely she wouldn't play such a wicked trick on me as that! She owed it to me to leave me her money! I'd *never* have stayed with her, and put up with all that I did, if I hadn't thought all the time that what she had to leave would be mine some day. Why should Mr. Owen come into it, even if they *were* engaged to be married? It's most horribly unfair!" Mary was clearly shaken.

"You do realise, though, don't you," said Dame Beatrice gently, "that, even if she had not altered her will in Henry Owen's favour, it would be invalidated upon her marriage to him, and would have had to be re-made."

"I didn't think she would marry him after the row they had," said Mary.

Dame Beatrice's next conversation was with Roger. He waylaid her on their way up from lunch.

"I say," he said, "I want to tell you something. Where can we go?"

"That depends upon how long it will take you to tell me your story and how much credence I am to place in it."

"Oh, look, I'm sorry I was such an ass about Knossos. I won't try to lead you up the garden again, really I won't. Anyway, it isn't any good, because you seem to know all the answers. But this is a sort of—well, I think I ought to tell somebody, and Suffolk wouldn't be any good, and Hero and Mary, well, I mean, they're just girls, aren't they?"

"I pass over this obvious prejudice against women," said Dame Beatrice, with a mirthless chuckle, "and I await your confession with interest tinged, I am compelled to admit, with incredulity."

"Yes, I can see you're not going to believe me, but I want to get it off my chest. After that, it's up to you."

"You should do well in the kind of official capacity where anything doubtful or difficult is always passed to somebody else. I am reminded of a brilliantly satirical comic strip I once saw in a newspaper.\* A young woman had a complaint about a garment she had purchased. The assistant referred her to the buyer, the buyer to the department manager, he to the sales director, he to the department for complaints and adjustments and from there she was still urged onwards, from one to another, only to find herself in the end confronted by the girl who had actually sold her the goods in question, and to whom she had made her first complaint."

"Yes, it's called passing the buck," said Roger, unimpressed. "Everybody does it if he gets the chance. What about it?"

"Only that you are attempting to pass the buck to me."

"Well, you're grown up and I still rate as a child."

"Some children are known to be precocious. Let us retire to the ship's gymnasium, which is unlikely to be requisitioned so soon after the midday meal, and there you shall unfold your story."

"You don't like me much, do you?" said Roger, as they strolled along the deck.

"Do you expect an answer to that question?"

"No, not really. I mean, one answer wouldn't be true and the other might hurt my feelings. I don't think you're awfully keen on hurting people's feelings, somehow."

They repaired to the gymnasium.

"You'd better sit on the 'camel,'" said Roger. "It's all right so long as you don't start the mechanism. Do you mind if I just gently punch the ball while I'm talking? It helps me to think and I like to adjust my ideas."

"This sounds like the preliminary to a confession of faults. Is it?" asked Dame Beatrice, declining to avail herself of the amenities of a seat on the "camel."

"I suppose it is, but I swear I never meant to do her any harm."

"You are referring to Mrs. Cowie, no doubt."

"Yes, I'm afraid so." He beat a light tattoo on the punching ball. "It was just a rather corny joke, you know. You see, she had this crackpot idea that she was Sappho come back to life. She kept harping on it until the governor almost went crazy and the rest of us kept right out of her way whenever we could. So Edmund and I got this idea that we'd kid her along. Incidentally, Edmund told you I couldn't do it, but I can."

"Ventriloquism, I presume."

"Yes. So we tossed up, and I won. Well, we knew she was determined to go to Sappho's Leap, because that was the only reason we'd gone to Leukas at all, and the governor was actually rather sick about it because it was wasting the time he wanted to spend on Corfu. Anyway, I lurked about and when I heard her enquiring about hiring a car I tried to

bribe the man to smuggle me into the boot, but he didn't seem to understand, and insisted upon shoving me into the back seat instead. Well, that wasn't really what I wanted, because I betted that she would want the back seat herself, not to sit beside the driver, but the chap had more savvy than I thought. He loaded a crate of hens on to the back seat—I was on the floor, of course, so I guessed she wouldn't spot me straight away—and what with the hens and so forth, she decided to take the seat next the driver after all."

"And during the journey you played your joke on her?"

"Well, yes. It went extremely well. The driver was most impressed and, I think, a bit scared at first, because I made my voice seem to come from the steering wheel. However, he knew I had some game on hand, so, apart from one frightful wobble when I first began to speak, he kept pretty good control, considering that we must have been going at a cracking rate—you know the way these fellows drive—one finger on the horn and one foot on the accelerator. It was great. Of course, as soon as I'd got off a piece about Sappho, which I had to do sitting up, I'd dodge right down again out of sight, just in case she suspected something, but she didn't seem to."

"And the driver aided and abetted you?"

"Oh, yes, like a real good chap. These Greeks have a great sense of humour, and I don't think this one cared awfully much about Mrs. Cowie because she told him she was going to knock something off his price because of the hens. Anyway, it was a long drive, but we got at last to the point where he told her she'd have to get out and do the rest of the journey on foot, so she did, and walked towards the cliffs, after telling the driver to be sure to wait for her, as she wouldn't be long."

"Were you not surprised that she had decided to make the journey alone?"



“Not really. Mary was supposed to go with her, as usual, but to stay in the car while Mrs. Cowie ‘communed alone with glorious Sappho.’ That was how she put it, if you ever heard such ghastly punk. But Mary claimed to be too ill to travel, and, instead, she must have sneaked back to Patras to go to Olympia, which nobody knew at the time, but, of course, it came out later.”

“Was Mrs. Cowie the only visitor to Sappho’s Leap that evening?”

“Oh, no. Leukas is quite a holiday island, and there were a couple more cars about, not so very far from ours, but they left soon after Mrs. Cowie got out of our car, so we were left until last, and, of course, Mrs. Cowie didn’t come back.”

“How far were you parked from the edge of the cliffs?”

“Oh, a goodish way. You’re thinking of hearing anybody yell if they went over, aren’t you? Well, we *might* have been near enough for that, but my driver had a radio and so we had music loud enough to split your eardrums while we waited.”

“And almost as soon as you arrived the other cars drove off?”

“Well, one did. The other stayed longer, and someone got in but we stuck about for Mrs. Cowie. In the end my chap began cursing, so I hopped out and went to look for her. I did quite a bit of scrambling about—I’m used to climbing, you see, and I’ve never had an accident yet—and I yelled out for her, but there wasn’t any reply, so, in the end, I went back to the car and reported nothing doing.

“‘I expect she was fed up about your hens on the back seat,’ I said, ‘and has gone back with somebody else.’ Well, of course, he cursed like mad about that, reversed the car, and we rocketed back at about a hundred and twenty miles an hour, and Mrs. Cowie never turned up again at the hotel.”

“Or anywhere else, and there was a body brought back from Sappho’s Leap for burial,” said Dame Beatrice sombrely. “However, I thank you for your story and declare you free of all blame. Your ventriloquist act, although naughty and somewhat ill-natured, made no difference. Mrs. Cowie was determined to go to Sappho’s Leap. Her death cannot be laid at the door of a mischievous boy. So you and your brother were both ventriloquists. That is very interesting. Tell me, how did Mary know that you went with Mrs. Cowie to those cliffs?”

Roger was astounded by this question, but Dame Beatrice thought she knew the answer to it. Mary had been in one of the other cars.

---

\* Sunday Express, June 21st, 1970. *The Gambols*.

## CHAPTER TEN

### **Holmesia, the Muse of Deductive Reasoning**

“‘Tush’ (said I), ‘you speak you cannot tell what. Behold, I am a man all of iron, and have never desire to sleep, and am more quick of sight than lynx or Argus.’”

“So now,” said Mrs. Solomons on the following morning, seating herself heavily beside Dame Beatrice, “you tell me how you get back my rubies for me.”

“I’m afraid that is a trade secret,” said Dame Beatrice. “So long as they were returned to you, that is sufficient, is it not? I can give you no explanation.”

“Tricks of a trade I respect. Look, now, when you want clients, you send to me. Here is my card. I find you plenty of people who want husbands or wives followed, or somebody to look after the wedding presents—all kinds of things. You pay me twenty per cent commission and I make your fortune, isn’t it?”

“It is very kind of you. I will certainly apply to you if I am short of clients. But I see Miss Metoulides approaching, and I am afraid you are occupying her deck-chair.”

“Oh, I do not need the chair any longer,” said Mrs. Solomons graciously. She heaved herself out of it with a grunt. “I go to find out what Leah is up to. She picked up a

boy and he is on board. There are cabins to spare because some are staying off in my country, and I am not sure whether this boy is suitable. His father is in furs, and I see no future in furs. Too much synthetic about, and at a cheaper price."

She waddled off and Hero seated herself.

"What on earth did *she* want?" she asked.

"Merely to render me a passing salutation, with an offer to make my fortune."

"Really? It is no harm to be friendly with Jews. What kind of fortune will she make for you?"

"She offers to get me commissions as a private eye."

Hero giggled.

"That will be good fun for you. Will you have to stand outside Brighton hotels in the rain, watching for Mr. X to offer the shelter of his umbrella to Mrs. Y?"

"Something of the kind, no doubt. I do not really feel it to be my *métier*, but Mrs. Solomons meant well and spoke in the kindest and most grateful way of a small service I was able to render her on the outward voyage."

"Her silly, extravagant, beautiful rubies, yes. Were you a private eye when you got them back from the thief?"

"No, merely an observant one, I think."

"Roger seems a subdued, well-mannered boy this morning. Have you been taking him to task?"

"That is not my *métier* either. I was an interested listener while he cleansed his bosom of some perilous stuff which seems to have been weighing upon his heart and troubling his conscience."

"I would not have thought either of those boys, or their father, come to that, had a conscience. I have never known such a heartless, selfish family. As well for Mrs. Cowie that she did not marry into it."

"You would not also call her heartless and selfish?"

"I do not speak ill of the dead."

"Oh, you think she is dead, do you?"

"What else? And everybody is very glad of it, except, perhaps, you. And although you are not glad, it is only because you have nothing to gain from it. You are outside, uncommitted, free."

"With 'everybody' you appear to include Mr. Dick."

"Oh, yes, of course. He is glad for his own reasons, but what they are I do not know."

Dame Beatrice was better informed than Hero. If Dick was glad it was because Megan was freed from her enemies and from the hands of such as hated her.

The voyage home was uneventful. The ship called at Malta and Tangier and finally docked at Southampton in drizzling rain. Dame Beatrice's chauffeur was there to meet her, and with him in the car was her son Ferdinand Lestranger, an eminent and busy Queen's Counsel, who, to her great pleasure, had come to escort her home and dine with her.

"Ah," she said, "just the person. After dinner I will a case unfold."

"You said something about it in your letters, I think. Did Mrs. Cowie's disappearance in that odd way spoil the trip for you? If so, what a pity! Greece must be wonderful in the late spring."

"Yes, indeed, and her disappearance spoilt nothing, although I think perhaps some of us suffered from a guilty conscience because it relieved our minds and also put an end to our dislike—in some cases, hatred—of the poor woman."

"Did *you* dislike her?"

"Well," said Dame Beatrice, "unfortunately one dislikes so many people."

"Not you, mother! You're about the most tolerant person I know."

"Tolerance of people does not eradicate dislike of them."

"Oh, well, I won't argue the point."

"Will you have time, after dinner, to listen to an intolerably long story?"

"Oh, yes, I am staying the night. Celestine has made all the arrangements and insists that you will be delighted to have me, so I've taken it for granted that you will."

She began her story as soon as the coffee-cups had been cleared, but not before Ferdinand had said:

"Your letters seemed to indicate that Mrs. Cowie is dead."

"That is what I want you to decide. Personally, I have little doubt of it, and most members of the party think the same."

"But the body was buried under another name, or so you wrote in your last letter. What makes you so sure that a mistake has been made?"

"I only *think* it has, and thinking is not the same as knowing. But listen, and you shall hear. To begin with, there are several people who would regard Mrs. Cowie's death as an unmixed blessing. Chief among these, I suppose, is her niece, Mary Cowie. She was totally dependent upon the aunt and resented this position intensely. I discovered, early on in our acquaintanceship, that she was not above helping herself to what was not her own, but that is not to say that she is capable of murder."

"To what did she help herself?"

"To begin with, she contrived to possess herself of a very valuable necklace of rubies which belongs to one of the cruise passengers. Fortunately, I was able to trace the theft to her and to restore the gems to their owner without much trouble and without publicity. Then, at a late stage in our Greek pilgrimage, she obtained enough money to pay for a car to take her from Patras to Olympia and back. Before that, I was told by Ronald Dick that she had abstracted money from his wallet."

"As you said, though, this doesn't mean that she is a murderess."

"There is more to come. Her aunt was to marry Henry Owen."

"The botanist?"

"Yes. It is true that the engagement was broken off, but Mary had every reason to believe that this was a temporary state of affairs."

"But wouldn't the marriage have given her her freedom and an allowance to live on?"

"Her aunt did not intend this. She was desirous of keeping Mary on as unpaid secretary. The household was also to include boys of seventeen and fourteen, Owen's sons, with whom Mary was not on good terms. Moreover, if the marriage took place, Mary would cease to be her aunt's heiress, or so she thought, and no doubt she was right, since Chloe Cowie was young enough to bear children."

"You make out a fairly formidable case against her, but motive is not everything, as the courts are well aware."

"I am well aware of it, too. But Mary is not the only person who may have wished Mrs. Cowie out of the way."

"I imagine that the two boys may not have wanted to acquire a stepmother."

"Not only that. She had plans for sending the older boy abroad to take up some sort of social service for a year before he begins his course at a university, and the younger lad was to go to school."

"School? Well, wasn't he at school anyway?"

"The boys have been educated at home. They have a tutor."

"Who would lose his job, I take it, if Mrs. Cowie's plans took shape."

"Yes, he would."

"Still, that's no reason for murdering her. I think you might cross him off your list."

"Oh, I agree. I have never seriously considered him. Another suspect, I regret to say, would be Ronald Dick, if I

could find that he had had any opportunity to kill Mrs. Cowie, but it seems certain that he had none."

"I've met him. Surely a less offensive little man never breathed?"

"Love laughs at other things besides locksmiths."

"Please explain what you mean."

"Well, I did not mention her in my letters, but Megan Metoulides, who used to be Megan Hopkinson, was living on the island of Leukas while we were in Greece, and was a proscribed person. Her Greek husband had been executed and she herself was considered to have feelings inimical to the régime, so was virtually in hiding. It was she who was identified as the dead woman at Sappho's Leap, but a mistake was possible, since she closely resembled her niece, Mrs. Cowie."

"But the difference in age!"

"There was not so much difference as you might suppose—nineteen years."

"But a competent medical examination would have established what I should call a pretty substantial difference."

"I doubt whether anything of the kind was carried out. The cause of death was clear enough and the authorities were satisfied that it was a case of suicide. In addition, the body would have been considerably battered after a fall at Sappho's Leap. At any rate, suicide was the official verdict. The body must have been buried somewhat hastily and Megan Metoulides written off."

"But hadn't it occurred to anybody on Leukas that the two women were much alike?"

"If my information is correct, Chloe Cowie had been on the island only a few hours before she disappeared, and if Megan was living very quietly, and in another part of the island, I doubt whether the resemblance would have been remarked upon."



“Well, why can’t we take it that the authorities are right, and that the death was a suicide for political reasons?”

“Well, for one thing, if Chloe Cowie is not dead, where is she?”

“Possibly in her usual haunts by now.”

“I shall make enquiries, of course, but I think it is significant that few of the party seem to have any doubt about what has happened.”

“Including your suspects? One of them—the murderer—is sticking his neck out, isn’t he?”

“It would look very suspicious if he (or she) was the only person to challenge the opinion of the rest.”

“So he (or she) doesn’t lack brains.”

“I said, a moment ago, that Ronald Dick would be among the suspects if I could see that he had had the opportunity to kill Chloe and so marry Megan Metoulides,” said Dame Beatrice, “but I thought that you might have deduced that there could be another person in the picture.”

“Oh, yes, I have. You refer to Megan Metoulides herself, I think. She is known to have been on the island, she had probably had a message from Dick that her niece, whom she so greatly resembled, was a visitor there, and she might have banked on the fact that the body would be taken for hers. The means was obvious—a good shove from the top of Sappho’s Leap—and the motive, which would have been to get the police off Megan’s neck, abundantly clear. Do we have to go any further?”

“I think so. We have to establish not only that she knew about Mrs. Cowie’s intention of visiting Sappho’s Leap . . .”

“She could have learned that in some way, perhaps?”

“She could have learned it from Ronald Dick. As I have told you, they were in communication with one another. I do not think Dick has ever got over his faithful infatuation for her.”

“Well, then!”

"But I do not see how she could have known the actual hour of Mrs. Cowie's visit to the cliffs. Ronald Dick could not possibly have told her that, any more than he would have told her the name of Chloe's hotel. The arrangement to visit Leukas was made almost on the spur of the moment, so that the party could not have made a reservation more than an hour or two in advance."

"All the same, if Megan went in fear of imprisonment, or even in fear of her life . . ."

"I know."

"You haven't mentioned the prospective husband, Henry Owen."

"At the time of Chloe's death it is probable that he was no longer the prospective husband."

"Then that does away with your suspicions of the two sons, doesn't it?"

"I was about to add that the estrangement may have been temporary only, and that my suspects realised that, or, at any rate, feared it."

"Oh, I see."

"You did not know Chloe Cowie. I think she broke the engagement in order to bring Henry Owen to heel. She fully intended to have her own way about retaining Mary in her service. Henry was against this—he did not want the girl in the house because he objected to Chloe's continuing with her writing after the marriage. He also was not enthusiastic about getting rid of the tutor because this also involved getting rid, in a measure, of the boys."

"Well, mother, it's a pretty enough problem. Why do you want to solve it?"

"Merely for my own satisfaction. I dislike loose ends. Have you nothing constructive to suggest?"

"Nothing at all. If it were my problem I would dismiss it from my mind. Except for Mrs. Cowie herself—and, even there, we cannot be sure that she is not better off where she is, whether dead or alive—everybody seems happier without

her. Besides, you are *assuming* that she is dead. You have not proved it."

The proof, so far as Dame Beatrice was concerned, came a few weeks later. It took the form of a notice in a national newspaper. The cutting was sent to her by her son. It was to the effect that a marriage had been arranged between Mr. Ronald Arthur Dick and Mrs. Sappho Chloe Cowie, to take place quietly abroad. No further details were given.

"So there is your poor corpse, very much alive and well," wrote Ferdinand.

"I do not think so," said Dame Beatrice over the telephone. She went to Christchurch to visit Mary Cowie. A smart maid opened the door. The flat was beautifully and (Dame Beatrice thought) newly furnished. Mary was admirably turned out. On her right hand was a magnificent half-hoop of diamonds. She greeted Dame Beatrice with great self-possession.

"How nice of you to call," she said.

"I really wanted to see your aunt and wish her happiness in her marriage," said Dame Beatrice.

"Oh, well, I'm afraid Aunt isn't here. She is abroad. I think the wedding is to take place in America."

"You *think*? Are you not invited to the ceremony?"

"Oh, weddings are not much in my line," said Mary, losing a little of her *savoir faire* and giving a nervous laugh.

"I suppose," said Dame Beatrice, indicating the ring, "your aunt could hardly wear Mr. Owen's token when she is going to be married to Mr. Dick."

"This is not the engagement ring."

Dame Beatrice held out an imperious yellow claw.

"So she bestowed it on you," she said, as Mary handed it over without, apparently, realising that there was an inscription inside which gave the lie to her statement. Dame Beatrice continued: "Strange. I should have thought, as she

paid for it, or partly paid for it, herself, that she would have thought she was entitled to keep it, even if she did not wear it on the same finger as her wedding ring. She was not, so far as my knowledge goes, usually so generous to you, I believe."

"Look," said Mary, now obviously ill-at-ease, "what are you getting at?"

Dame Beatrice handed back the glittering trifle.

"I suppose your aunt left the ring at the hotel when she went to Sappho's Leap," she said.

"How should I know what she did?"

"And I suppose you were so sure she would not come back that you thought it would be perfectly safe to appropriate it and her money and her traveller's cheques, and anything else that was hers and of value. I wonder, though, that you care to display the ring so openly."

"You don't know what you're saying!"

"Do I not?" asked Dame Beatrice, with gentle grimness. "But, as I look around at these luxurious furnishings and consider your smart maid and your own fashionable and becoming garments, I know that Megan Metoulides, and not Chloe Cowie, is to marry Ronald Dick. Why should your aunt consent to be married quietly abroad? And why should Ronald Dick, in that case, have made certain that the name of Chloe Cowie should appear in our national press? The wedding would not be one of great public interest, and, until now, Ronald Dick has never courted publicity. There must be some good reason for the announcement."

"Oh, my aunt insisted upon it, I suppose. Her books were very well known." Mary looked both frightened and angry.

"That *could* account for the notice, of course, but I am perfectly sure it does not. Neither does it account for your present prosperity."

"Why should not Mr. Dick have been generous to me? If Aunt is married, I have no hope of her money any more."

"No, you have no hope of it, and for the best of reasons. You cannot announce her death, yet she *is* dead. You killed her at Sappho's Leap. Those who owe you a great deal are Megan Metoulides and Ronald Dick, for you have given liberty and perhaps life itself to one, and you have committed the other to marrying the woman with whom he has always been in love. No wonder they have been generous."

Mary capitulated, and sank down on to a chair.

"What are you going to do about it?" she asked feebly.

"Nothing. There is nothing I *can* do," Dame Beatrice briskly replied. "You have committed murder, but, then, so did Megan in her time, although I must admit that her motive was not sordid, a statement which can scarcely be applied to your own."

"I didn't kill Aunt for her money. I hated her," said Mary, beginning to weep with self-pity.

"Probably as good a reason for killing her as any other, if there *is* a reason for killing people. However, I foresee future complications, I'm afraid."

"You can never prove anything against me!"

"No. I do not suggest that we dig up that body on Leukas."

"Do you suppose Julian knows the truth?"

"We all know it, and nobody can prove it. The first fact you must live with; the second, of course, has certain advantages for you, since it seems unlikely that you will go to prison."

"I suppose you're sorry about that!"

"Oh, no, I think you have served your term. It is not only a robin redbreast in a cage which puts all heaven in a rage. Your aunt was not an admirable woman."

## About the Author



Gladys Mitchell was born in the village of Cowley, Oxford, in April 1901. She was educated at the Rothschild School in Brentford, the Green School in Isleworth, and at Goldsmiths and University Colleges in London. For many years Miss Mitchell taught history and English, swimming, and games. She retired from this work in 1950 but became so bored without the constant stimulus and irritation of teaching that she accepted a post at the Matthew Arnold School in Staines, where she taught English and history, wrote the annual school play, and coached hurdling. She was a member of the Detection Club, the PEN, the Middlesex

Education Society, and the British Olympic Association. Her father's family are Scots, and a Scottish influence has appeared in some of her books.